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How to Help Your Community Recover from Disaster: A Manual for Planning and Action

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Part I.

Introduction

The Reasons Behind this Manual

Like many in the world, we, the authors of this manual, have been deeply moved after a number of recent disasters throughout the world. Much as you might have felt or are feeling now if a recent disaster hit your community, we wanted to do something to help. We believe local communities hold key solutions to short-term and long-term disaster recovery. It was therefore natural for us to gather together with others who have knowledge about disasters and the ways communities work to identify strategies and solutions toward real action.

Our group is not large and yours does not need to be either. Our group started with *one person* who recruited two others (who in turn recruited one more, and so on…). These initial organizers were community psychologists and members of the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA), a Division of the American Psychological Association (APA). The incoming president of the society convinced the leadership to create a task force called the *SCRA Task Force on Disaster, Community Readiness, and Recovery*. We identified a diverse group of researchers, evaluators, and community practitioners who brought versatile abilities to the task force, with each member focused on the community and dedicated to using scientific knowledge toward practical, real-world action. In the end, we had collected a group of twenty people who worked together for many months.

We quickly found we knew much more collectively than any one of us did alone. Together, we possessed a range of knowledge about the effects of disaster, social policy issues, community organizing, and intervention strategies. Some of us had engaged in past research or served on various committees together. Most of us were collaborating directly with each other for the first time. We believed our work mattered and that we had the essential elements of a smoothly functioning group—we each had something unique to contribute to the enterprise.

We drafted our mission statement, applied for a small grant from the American Psychological Association, and gratefully used those funds to begin outlining this manual, *How to Help Your Community Recover from Disaster*. What evolved most clearly was a desire to foster the strengths of natural and potential community leaders, in other words, *you*. Nothing was more important than this targeted readership, which could be quite broad, from someone with absolutely no experience in this type of activity to a person involved in training for a disaster response in a local township. In any disaster, many types of community stakeholders have a vested interest in recovery activities and outcomes. Each stakeholder is a point of access, a gatekeeper, who can provide leadership, and receive and pass on information and resources to bring about significant improvements in how a community responds to a disaster.

Other salient stakeholders during a disaster include policy makers, those who run relief organizations, or those who work in educational institutions. This manual may serve as a guide

for them too. We truly believe that anyone willing to try and make a positive difference can, particularly with a little guidance, make all the difference in the world.

Therefore we designed this manual for any community member (or organization) who has the interest, inclination, and potential for action and leadership. There are certain people who—for whatever reason—have the desire to bring about change. They possess that special energy to help – to do something good in the face of something daunting. We therefore have no expectations that readers will have any single affiliation or employment status that would put them – put you – at the forefront of a community response to disaster. What is fundamental is your decision to help your community recover from disaster, and most importantly, with a long-term view in mind.

From the outset we believe it is important to take any advice about responding to a disaster through action with an emphasis on flexibility and context. There are many unique types of people working in various communities on very different types of disasters. Even the terms "community" and "disaster" can mean many different things. A "community" can refer to a traditional neighborhood, a temporary park of FEMA trailers, or simply any circle of people, large or small, who share a common fate. A "disaster" can be a hurricane, flood, or some other natural disaster. It may also refer to a terrorist attack, shooting, or other, local critical incident. The defining feature of a disaster is that it happens to an entire community. Members are exposed together and must recover together—and that recovery often takes a very long time. It is often when all the emergency crews and media have left that the local stakeholders can make the biggest difference. And that is why the majority of this manual focuses on this later, longer-term phase.

What does the overall structure of the manual look like? If you are currently in the midst of a post-disaster situation, you are best situated to determine the effects of this disaster on your particular community. Nevertheless, in the next section, Part II, we share some of the common effects of disasters on both individuals and communities. We expect you will recognize some of the challenges your own community is now facing. Part III focuses on ways to bring together community members and organizations to work more effectively as a cohesive group. In Part IV, we describe strategic ways to begin assessing your community's needs and assets (that is, the community specialties and strengths that can fulfill those needs). Part V outlines specific techniques that will help create an effective action plan for your group. Part VI details outreach strategies, particularly in relation to diverse groups. Part VII describes other community-based approaches that may be helpful, including self-help, train-the-trainer techniques, and social marketing. Part VIII focuses on the important topic of tracking the steps you have taken and the results thus far obtained. Part IX moves into the idea of prevention, the idea that it is never too late to take the valuable step of preparing your community for further negative events. In Part X we discuss enhancing disaster readiness through public education. Finally, Part XI, the Appendix, we have provided a list of many resources you may find useful. We hope most of all that the manual will help take you to the next step of bringing about a greater good in the face of inevitably difficult structural and psychological challenges in the aftermath of a disaster.

Principles that Guide Community Work

The ideas presented throughout this manual are founded on the principles of community psychology. Since these principles form the basis of the manual, we believed that orienting you to these general ways of looking at communities was a good place to start.

1. *Solid research information promotes good decisions in the real world (and vice versa).*

   Scientific research and practical action are of equal value when trying to bring about positive forms of change. The relationship between research and action is cyclical. We obtain information from a variety of sources, consolidate it and plan, and then get involved and use that information in real world actions. Things don't always work out perfectly, but we look at the results, re-think things, gather more research information, and start again. The manual will continually encourage you to think creatively but also to collect and use information to develop action plans, to attempt to use that knowledge, some of which the manual will provide, and then to do good work in the community, and to evaluate or at least to take a close look at your results.

2. *Multiple contexts demand flexibility.*

   Perhaps our most important piece of advice is NOT to take our advice or anyone else's too prescriptively or too strictly. Flexibility is an absolute necessity. Community psychologists always try to acknowledge varying contexts, and we encourage you to do the same. Our hope is that you will approach this manual and all other informational resources on disasters in the same way. In any disaster situation, despite the seeming random nature of events, there are themes, generalities, and guidelines that can help guide you on your journey. Some of those guidelines can be found in the research literature, which we attempt to summarize when relevant. And there are other forms of experience and common sense that are as important as the research. Despite the themes, no two disasters yield the same set of challenges. Every community is different, and the ways in which people react to a disaster—even the same type of disaster, such as a tornado hitting the same community twice—are different. To make effective decisions, it is essential to pay attention to the changing contexts and to keep one's thinking nimble. Accept change—disasters will force things to change—plan for the unexpected, and don't ever become too attached to any one idea or approach when a particular strategy just isn't working.

3. *Social justice is always at risk in any community under duress.*

   During and following disasters, social injustices are likely to arise and should always be a major source of concern. Those struggling financially, people with certain disabilities, and children tend to be most affected in this arena, and often have the least political clout to protect their rights. Your role is to help the community help itself recover, to restore a greater sense of well-being for all. Such interventions must enhance the

welfare and fundamental rights of everyone. Certain steps can appear to some to be the only strategic ones in the short-term. But when they infringe on the rights of members of specific groups, they most often result in forms of long-term harm. *Participatory approaches*, meaning those that seek input from community members, work to gain information that can help ensure the rights and perspectives of all community members are more fully valued. Collaborative approaches make good sense. They engender trust, and this trust often leads to better collective decision-making, greater community cohesion, and other mutual benefits to all members of the community.

4. *Knowledge is a public, not merely a specialized, private good.*

   Good community psychologists are eager to "give psychology (or any form knowledge or expertise we may possess) away." This is a philosophy we hope will also guide your efforts as you become more and more of an expert in helping communities through a long-term disaster response. One area where you may be in the best position to share this knowledge is in helping your own community or others better prepare for a future disaster. We did not put the prevention and preparation section of this manual at the end because we believed it was secondary. Nor does our focus on longer-term recovery intend to de-emphasize the importance of immediate disaster responses. We know that most people become enthused about immediate recovery, and while we believe much of the content here can help, we realize that reading a manual, absorbing it, being planful, and thinking about evaluation requires at least a little breathing room. We value preparation and prevention most highly of all. And yet we understand the value of prevention is most appreciated by those who have already experienced a disaster. If you are in a position to do so, we encourage you to skip ahead and read the prevention and preparation section first. But in the tradition of “giving knowledge away,” we hope those of you who have experienced disasters and made good use of this manual will promote the necessity of *readiness* in other communities.

5. *Actions should emphasize strengths and solutions, not simply challenges and deficits.*

   It is tempting to simply list typical problems encountered during a disaster, and then describe the various resources communities use to lessen these problems. But research and experiences repeatedly emphasize that there is a whole other positive side, such as the contribution of supportive social networks that increase a person’s well-being. What assets exist in a community? How do the best forms of social support, how does a greater sense of community, develop? How do you build on the unique strengths of different community stakeholders? How do you deal positively with well-intentioned and even less well-intentioned individuals who show up from outside of the community? How do you build roles for everyone so they can make and feel like they are making important contributions? How do you leverage the strengths of organizations (schools, churches, etc.), and mobilize volunteers? Many sections of the manual provide strategic advice on these key issues.

> One more point about emphasizing the positive and community psychology. Oftentimes there is a concern that actions and interventions can do more harm than good to a community. This is not an irrelevant concern even if such thinking can discourage action. We believe the solution is simple. If you are out not for your own gain but to help the community and particularly the most vulnerable, if your goal is not to enhance your own ego but to improve the lives of others, if you focus on strengths, and if you take a participatory approach, the risks associated with action should not deter your efforts. If your heart is in the right place and if you center on the positive, you may make some mistakes, from which you will learn, but you are far more likely to bring about beneficial change. And there is simply too much to get done to resort to excessive caution and to prevent oneself from helping others.

These few principles of community psychology are just a start and you will encounter many more ideas associated with this field of thought in the following sections. We believe you will find the perspectives useful as you begin to confront the challenges of community action and post-disaster recovery.

Other Thoughts Regarding this Manual

The ordering of the manual's individual sections was loosely based on the sequential stages likely to be encountered during long-term disaster recovery, and therefore the most effective steps that might be considered at each of the stages. You cannot do everything on your own; therefore there is some sense in thinking at an early stage about how to bring a group together. Conducting a rough needs assessment might be a next step to consider. Then you might draft an action plan, and move on from there. But again our goal is to avoid being too prescriptive about any step and particularly when that step may be taken. You may want to focus on particular sections and strategies when you find them most useful. You might want to turn immediately to ones that look interesting. You are the pilot, and this is consistent with the emphasis here on the "cycles of progress." All of your thinking, all decision-making, all stages, all processes, are likely to go through numerous cycles. This is something worth accepting and appreciating as normal. You will need that energy and good faith that positive results will occur because beneficial effects will require some longer-term forms of endurance. Despite the cycles, progress will eventually be made. Disasters will be chaotic; planning will limit that chaos, but nothing will eliminate it altogether.

At the end of this manual, we list many sources that we believe provide effective pieces of advice and expand on the issues we introduce here. Many of the organizations listed are U.S. based and if you are in the U.S. you may want to look at the appendix and sources of information as soon as possible. Once again, not every piece of information here, or anywhere else, should be accepted at face value. Community leaders should strive to be wise consumers, oftentimes modifying program models to most appropriately consider the current context. We tried throughout the Manual to not be too prescriptive, but sometimes we may sound prescriptive. We tried to be sensitive to language of all sorts, language about those affected by disasters, about specific, often disenfranchised groups. We may not always be successful. We

tried to keep a focus on long-term recovery rather than immediate responses to a disaster but some of the long-term advice is useful for immediate disaster recovery and vice versa. What is most important about this document is our intention to keep it as a “living document,” one that can change over time to gradually become more and more relevant to a wider variety of communities throughout the world. That always comes from getting good, critical feedback.

In essence, a primary goal of the Manual is to share specific tips and general philosophies about managing different stakeholder interests, particularly when they are in competition with one another, to make your own voice heard, to negotiate and navigate through difficulties, and to marshal the social and tangible resources around you.

Just remember: you are the expert on your own community, not us. You are the one who can engage and empower your community, not us. If this manual does little other than help you refine your natural inclinations and talents, then we all will have succeeded together.

Part II.

Communities, the Effects of Disasters, and Resilience

The Nature of Disaster Exposure

Disasters have been studied extensively. As a result, we know quite a bit about the experiences people and communities are likely to have. Knowing these common experiences can help guide your decisions. Individuals and communities nevertheless experience disasters in different ways. All disasters are stressful, but most of the time, the majority of people cope and function quite well in the face of it. That is not to place the blame on those who, for a wide variety of reasons, find disasters more difficult and devastating.

In the worst disasters, people die. But even in disasters that cause little loss of life, there is often a widespread and justified perceived threat to life and injury. Experiences people feel of terror and horror, or trauma, can be closely linked to serious forms of distress.

Losses can be profound and extensive. Homes are damaged, personal possessions are destroyed, jobs are lost, and time for fun or recreation can quickly become a thing of the past. These losses can be extraordinarily hard on anyone.

In many cases, immediate losses are followed by a host of challenges associated with poor or crowded housing conditions. The challenges occur through rebuilding, and many other forms of stressors in the post-disaster environment. Of all the ongoing difficulties experienced by disaster survivors, displacement is among the most disruptive. In non-disaster contexts, relocation is not an intrinsically negative event, but forced (unwanted) relocation due to politics, war, urban renewal, contamination, or other forms of disaster is almost always disruptive and stressful.

Here we break things down in a very individualistic framework, thinking about two broad categories of disaster survivors. *Primary victims* are those who directly experience personal losses. *Secondary victims* include other who live in the affected area and are negatively impacted. Although they sustain no personal injuries or property damage, those who are more in the secondary victim category experience a variety of inconveniences and economic, social, and cultural disruptions that can range from mild to severe. Primary and secondary victims alike may experience declines in companionship and leisure. Both may be involved in community conflicts around the disaster and around what the most appropriate responses to the disaster are. Disasters can therefore cause problems even among those who experience no direct losses themselves. Generally, these “indirect effects” are more transient than direct ones, but they can create severe harm in the lives of many.

A topic of some controversy today is whether someone can be exposed to a disaster via the media, especially television. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, for example, many people across the nation saw repeated images of airplanes smashing into the towers, of

the buildings collapsing, and worse. In several studies, frequent exposure to these images was related to distress, and most experts recommended that people limit their exposure, especially in the case of children. Even for those who do quite well during a disaster, it is important for them to detach from the repetitive news and "refresh" with other activities.

Common Effects of Disasters

Given the variety of ways in which people experience disasters, it should not be surprising that people react in a range of different ways. Especially in the early days after a disaster, it is normal to feel anxious (nervous, worried, tense), depressed (sad, downhearted), fatigued, and occasionally overwhelmed. Problems sleeping or concentrating are very common. Yet, usually, despite their distress, people are able to fulfill their normal roles and, in time, they begin to feel better. A smaller proportion of people – and these tend to be those who were most seriously exposed – will experience more severe and chronic forms of anxiety and depression. They may find it difficult to meet life's normal demands and won't necessarily get better on their own. People who feel seriously anxious or depressed should tell their doctors or counselors, as there are a number of effective treatments for clinical anxiety and depression. It can be very important to normalize help-seeking, to work to decrease the stigma of seeking help from mental health professionals, and to guide people to these resources.

The psychological condition that gets the most attention after disasters is posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is not unusual for people to react to a disaster with some symptoms of PTSD, such as intrusive thoughts, problems concentrating, or jumpiness. For most people, these reactions are manageable and naturally go away in time. For others, the experience can be quite severe and distressing. Again, when the symptoms interfere with normal functioning, people should seek professional help. Untreated PTSD can equally affect a person's physical health (including through suicide), so it's best to seek help before too long.

PTSD is not the only reason disaster survivors experience problems in their physical health. Aches and pains, colds, and the like are common reactions to weakened immune systems and to the exposure to a variety of stressful events. It is sometimes more difficult for people to eat right or exercise routinely; some gain and others lose weight. If they never were before, people are not likely to start smoking or drinking after disasters. But preexisting smokers and drinkers may increase their consumption. Some who have successfully quit smoking may slide back to old patterns. Getting enough sleep may become the biggest problem, and once again, seeking professional help is the best option.

In response to a disaster, youth can have psychological problems specific to their age groups. For young children, these problems can include reasonable forms of dependence, refusing to sleep alone, temper tantrums, aggressive behavior, incontinence, hyperactivity, and separation anxiety. Some adolescent survivors of disasters can turn to more risky behaviors such as alcohol and drug use and sex.

Disasters can lead to social or relationship difficulties that accompany the psychological consequences of the event. These are especially important from a community action perspective, where it is important to come together as a community. Peoples' perceptions of being supported by others and their sense of belonging to a cohesive community can be easily damaged. Hurt relationships can develop. Researchers have observed an interesting paradox. In the early days following a disaster, people can go out of their way to help one another and experience a significant sense of solidarity. Yet as time passes, disasters can remove people from their social networks. This can happen through death and relocation, and such separations can have many different negative effects, including the disruption of day-to-day activities that maintain social ties. Disasters often overwhelm available sources of support. When social support declines, people are known to feel even more sad or distressed, and there are just a converging number of forces on the person, families, and the community.

Are there any positive effects of disasters? People frequently report that disasters have brought them closer to family members, friends, or God or made them more greatly appreciate their blessings and strengths. The ability to see the good side of bad events is admirable, but the silver linings do not always outweigh the negative consequences of disasters on psychological, interpersonal, and community well-being. It is through your actions, that you can make these positive outcomes more likely, for many.

Two Among Many Possible Pathways

The effects of disasters on people change over time. Every person and every context is different. Some pathways are, from a mental health perspective, more ideal than others. Yet there is no "wrong" path. No single person should ever be "blamed" for having more persistent difficulties. This is an important caution in respect to every statement we make in this manual regarding "resilience." Nevertheless, knowing something about some common patterns and progression of effects, you may be able to better help yourself and others understand the effects that are often experienced over time. Despite the endless varieties of paths and the importance of treating people according to their unique experiences, we are going to simplify things by talking about two possible paths: one reflecting a smoother upturn in recovery and one reflecting a far more difficult common path. Both paths are going to start out from similar, difficult places, but then the description of the experiences will diverge over time. Then we will talk about some initial types of interventions that may help.

Both of the described pathways may begin with the following experiences:

1. Initial shock and mourning, fear, anxiety, and depression. Many emotions are experienced here.

2. Initial sense of being overwhelmed.

3. A sense that things are not real, are occurring to someone else. Like a bad dream from which one needs to be awoken.

4. Positive and negative expectations of survival. Depending on the events, people may feel great relief over their own and their family's survival, but they also frequently experience a sense of guilt over others who have been hurt, perished, or lost homes or property.

5. Intense anger at fate, the government, the attackers (if that is the case), or even at God for allowing such things to happen.

6. Sleep difficulty and troubles eating, particularly healthy foods, often with a risk of trying to self-medicate with alcohol or drugs.

7. Being consistently reminded in this stage of the original horror or fear. People often report feeling like they can still see the events unfold before their eyes.

Within a few weeks the paths can diverge. Why a person tends to take one path more than another involves a host of contextual factors.

The swifter recovery path:

1. Some people start to feel better in days or weeks. The extent to which they are consumed by negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and fear often diminishes over time. They begin to think more clearly and solve their associated problems more soundly. They experience less of a "I'm in a fog feeling." Despite periods of intense sadness, the pieces begin to fit together again.

2. Despite sadness, anxiety, and some fear, the ability to plan—to take action, to put plans into place—begins to gel. It is common to even feel bad that one is not feeling worse, particularly if loved ones or close friends have been lost or seriously injured.

3. Some slippage or backsliding is normal. People can and will have some bad hours or days.

4. When things seen in the environment remind one of the tragic events, or when the re-occur in dreams, the feelings and reactions gradually lessen in intensity.

5. The ability to sleep is restored, eating returns to normal, and the sometimes additional need for self-medicating through alcohol or drugs diminishes.

6. Within weeks there is a fairly full return to normal routines. Things may feel like one is not fully back into one's routine, but one is doing what needs to be done.

7. People begin to once again feel close to others, and communities are able to operate together in better harmony.

8. Within several weeks to about 6 months after the disaster—depending on the individual's personal and social resources and the amount of loss that accompanied the disaster—there can be a return to life's routine, feelings of satisfaction over areas of life, such as work and family activities, and a fuller re-connection with loved ones. However, this is a NEW normal and may have an edge of sadness or sense of loss if loved ones are gone or continue to sustain serious injuries or where one's home or community continues to experience widespread devastation.

The more difficult path:

1. People fail to feel better after several weeks. They continue to be consumed by negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and fear. They continue to feel they cannot think clearly and problem solve. They continue to feel "in a fog." The pieces of life just don't seem to be coming together and this is accompanied by intense sadness or anxiety and may be marked by more chronic forms of fear. Difficulties with sleep, work, social life, and family relations may become increasingly problematic.

2. The experience of sadness, anxiety, and fear just won't subside enough to allow for clear thinking and planning. The ability to sleep and eat continues to be deeply disturbed, and the chronic nature of these habits takes a negative toll on physical health or one's sense of well-being.

3. Some slippage or backsliding can occur in every case, but the backsliding can seem more precipitous, and there is more what feels like "push back" than forward movement. Individuals at this stage feel particularly withdrawn and disconnected with others. In many cases, life may not seem worth living.

4. After 3 to 6 months, when there is a failure to return to life's routines, and little feeling of satisfaction over any area of life, and people are either withdrawn or overly dependent on loved ones, there is a strong indication of being on a comparatively less than positive path. The sense of still being overwhelmed is as if the tragic events are still fresh.

The Role of Crises in Your Efforts to Advocate for the Community

Whether it is on an individual or community level, disasters create crises. A crisis is when there is some upset in the normal balance of an individual or community and where usual ways of solving problems don't work; it is an emotionally significant or radical change of status in a person's or community's life.

What happens to people when they are in a state of crisis?

- Stressful situations and the inability to get things back to normal lead to a high state of tension.

- People see the crisis as a serious threat to their future and have strong feelings of helplessness and vulnerability—they are in a crisis because they do not fee like they are able to handle life events as they normally do.

- People feel confused, cannot think clearly, and have strong feelings of fear.

- Behavior can be disorganized--as they become more and more frantic to resolve the problem and get themselves back together.

A crisis can be resolved in three possible ways:

- *Negative*. People, even with the best help there is, may not be able to restore their balance, and may become even more disorganized. This is going to be true for some people no matter what you do to help.

- *Neutral*. People may return to their normal state, restore their balance and go on as before the crisis.

- *Positive*. People may put themselves back together in a new, even more effective and healthy way; because of the experiences they are stronger and better able to handle any new crises that may occur.

People are typically more susceptible to influence and change during crisis periods. Thus, crises yield rich opportunities for community members to develop different approaches and receive new understandings of their world. You can continue to help your community find alternative ways of dealing with the new problem(s). Although crises demand immediate attention, you may want to focus simply on listening to people. Respect what they have to say, even if their thinking doesn't seem clear. Don't patronize them. Help them to calm down, and think about what needs to be done next. Do not let crises jeopardize the areas of change already being worked on and the successes already accomplished.

Five Essential Elements of Intervention

A collection of experts on disaster and trauma recovery developed this list on the basis of extensive review of available research and wisdom gained from experience in responding to disasters and tragedies around the world. If your work, in some way, promotes *safety, calm, efficacy, connectedness*, and/or *hope*, you will achieve something important. Although the nature of tragic events varies, the following general principles can guide post-disaster intervention. Promote:

1. *A sense of safety*

   This includes promoting both actual safety and when true, the perception that the environment is safe. This is often accomplished together with fire fighters and police officers, government officials, and organizations such as churches, community centers, and non-governmental organizations (called NGOs). If people are not placed in relative safety and reminded of this safety it will be hard for further aspects of psychological recovery and recovery-related actions to take place.

2. *Calming*

   The need to lower people's anxiety levels is critical. This does not mean that it is abnormal to feel anxiety. Some degree of anxiety and fear is normal, but for their own well-being, people need to be calm enough to begin functioning normally, including sleeping, caring for themselves and loved ones, and returning to the extent possible to normal routines in days and weeks, depending on the nature and extent of the disaster. Calmness can and should also be encouraged through responsible public messaging, recommendations about how to cope, and authorities putting the threat into proper perspective.

3. *A sense of self and collective efficacy*

   The more that people can take charge of their own care and recovery, the more they will feel a sense of confidence in themselves, their families, and communities. Too much of a dependence on authorities and relief agencies can be counterproductive, making residents feel less rather than more capable. To foster collective efficacy, survivors should be included in planning and recovery decision-making (a piece of advice we will repeat again and again).

4. *Connectedness*

   Social support is one of the most important ingredients in recovery. Some promotion of connectedness is helped by technology and common sense. Getting people in touch with, living with, and caring for loved ones is important. On the community level, the more people are encouraged to meet and work together and to participate together in

recovery efforts, and the more these meetings are facilitated, the better and the more residents will feel connected to others. People may need some quiet or alone time, but continued isolation can also be a warning sign of mental health concerns.

5. *Hope*

   One may not want to promote unrealistic optimism about the future, but where there is room for hope, it should be encouraged. Messages of hope are best when they are realistic. Things may never be as they were, especially if there was loss of life. But, to the extent that positive planning and recovery efforts are put into place on individual, family and community levels, more hope will be instilled. Survival stories can be helpful. Volunteers who come from formerly affected communities and who have recovered can share recovery stories, ideas, and plans. One year after a devastating tornado occurred, a resident organized a neighborhood "potluck" anniversary dinner and invited neighborhood residents and volunteers. Many recovery stories were shared that day and the ongoing support for those who had lost loved one was moving.

Resources that Promote Community Resilience to Disasters

Resilience is not something intrinsic to a community, but is something that can be developed and encouraged. The strength of the community can have a great influence on the relative frequency of these good or bad outcomes. Success or failure in coping after disasters depends in large part on the extent of the disaster and other unchangeable factors, but it also depends on the characteristics and actions of those affected individuals and their communities.

What resources can best help facilitate recovery at the community level? What features encourage more community resilience? The concept of "resilience" is critical in thinking about disaster recovery. Again, the idea of "resilience" should never be used to judge a particular person or community as a "success" or "failure." Resilience simply refers to the process of "bouncing back" after a disturbance. It refers to the ability to *adapt* to change. It is not simply returning to the way things were before the disaster but rather entails the opportunity and potential to grow. Post-disaster community action, and a return to social integration with others, for example, reflects this adaptability and potential.

Resilience is an ongoing process that is achieved over time. Resilience is not something that a person or community has or doesn't have forever. Given that resources associated with resilience can be cultivated; skills associated with resilience can be learned and practiced. Thinking about the factors that create community resilience might help you to decide on positive actions you and your group might take. This should be true regardless of whether you are working towards disaster recovery or greater disaster preparedness.

Some have thought of community resilience depending on four broad sets of resources or capacities of a community hit by disaster that aid adaptation and growth. These are the levels of 1) Social Capital, 2) Information & Communication, 3) Collective Efficacy, and 4) Economic

Development. Reviewing the list below may help you to identify the strengths of your community. Our discussion of the effects of disaster may have alerted you to *problems* in your community, but we hope this section will alert you to potential *solutions*. As is true with every section of the Manual, we are not pointing out these features to simply make you think, "It is too late, my community is not particularly resilient." It is never too late, and these are some the changes you can help bring about that will have the biggest effect. You will see that your actions can influence the strength of these factors (and thereby increase community resilience) in multi-faceted ways.

1. *Social Capital*

   Social capital refers to resources available to people and communities through their social relationships and ties that are oftentimes informal and voluntary. There are many different aspects of social capital important for community action and disaster recovery.

   Resilient communities, those that have protective approaches to protect them from the fullest impact of the stress, often form *effective networks of people and organizations.* These networks often possess a number of similar characteristics. For instance, they are characterized by reciprocal links, meaning that the helping is a back and forth process, not unidirectional. The interactions among these networks tend also be frequent. Moreover, the individuals and groups have the openness and ability to form new associations, that is, to connect with new groups and make new associations.

   Consistent with these networks, resilient communities have a great many interactions where *social support* is occurring. Family and other primary support groups (friends, neighbors, co-workers) are the most important sources of this support. Asking for help from others, including loved ones, can be difficult in a disaster. Family and friends, after all, are likely to be disaster survivors themselves. This is one reason why your ability to help and provide them with support and help them find support is so important.

   Social capital also encompasses relationships between individuals and their larger neighborhoods. This "*sense of community*," or feeling of being connected to other community members, is accompanied by respect for the needs of all. It is another vital building block of community resilience. Many disasters disrupt a group's sense of community because the new scarcity of resources can create conflict and even polarization of communities, though sometimes these threats can bring about the opposite. One essential goal is to help guide the circumstances so the environmental threats do what they can often do best; that is, bring people together.

   Communities can also be strengthened by something called *place attachment.* This is closely related to one's sense of community. It implies, apart from connections to people, a strong emotional bond with one's physical locale, whether that locale is a particular street, neighborhood, or city. Place attachments are foundations of self- and collective-identities and provide a sense of stability and continuity. Place attachments

can be essential for community resilience efforts and help acts as a collective, psychological springboard for revitalization efforts.

2. *Information & Communication*

Information- and communication-based resources are vital in emergencies. Information, of course, is only as good as it is accurate and gets to people in time. The more that communities can cultivate sound sources of information and encourage public adherence, the better. People tend to trust communications when they reflect the values and priorities of the local population.

Trusted information and effective communication resources often includes "narratives" or stories that reflect a community's shared understanding of the past and present. Creating narratives is one way to lend hope in difficult times.

For example, an anthropologist, Sharon Abramowitz, studied six Guinean communities attacked by Sierra Leonean and Liberian forces in 2000-2001. Symptoms of posttraumatic stress were much higher in three of the communities. In the three more highly distressed communities, respondents shared the feeling that government and non-governmental organizations had neglected them. As they mourned the loss of their homes and markets, the respondents also felt like social rituals and practices, including reciprocity and charity, had been all but abandoned. There was a widespread belief that some community members had prospered at the expense of others. In the other three communities, distress was present, but less so. They had felt like they were able to maintain many social rituals. Residents were more convinced that customs and social practices would return to normal as soon as economic conditions improved. Most importantly, they had created a collective story, emphasizing their common resistance to violence of their attackers.

3. *Collective Efficacy*

As referred to earlier, collective efficacy involves the confidence a group has to achieve its goals. It is a sense of hope. Yet the idea also embodies a community's ability to recognize its strengths and limitations, reflect on available options for action, and creatively approach solving problems. Many group-level skills are necessary for effective collective decision-making and action. Communities can develop better skills to collect and analyze information, to engage in constructive group processes, to reach consensus more quickly, and to more effectively resolve conflicts. Critical reflection and judicious problem solving are helpful in any decision-making context, but they are most imperative when groups are faced with threats or emergencies.

Communities that believe they can, usually do. This common trust in the group's effectiveness, willingness to work together in concerted actions to meet challenges, and a mutual faith in collective survival and prosperity is indispensable. The notion of

empowerment is a concept, accentuating the idea of building, or development, of mastery whereby people lacking access to resources, gain by collective action greater access to and control over necessary resources. Following a disaster, community action is very much about empowering local people to take control over their own recovery.

4. *Economic Development*

   This factor encompasses the most tangible economic resources and the means of their distribution. Land and raw materials, money, accessible housing, health services, schools, and employment opportunities create the essential resource base of a resilient community. Communities that rely on a narrow range of resources – for example, a one-factory town or a one-crop farming community – can be particularly vulnerable. The consequences of a disaster can be far-reaching if that one factory shuts down or that one crop is destroyed. Resilient communities aim for "resource diversity" rather than dependency on one particular resource.

   Community resilience also depends on how fairly resources are distributed. Some communities are less successful in fairly mobilizing aid and support after disasters. Aid should go to people who need it the most; unfortunately it often finds its way to those with higher social status or political connections. Resilient communities will pay attention to (and advocate more vigorously for) more equitable forms of resource distribution.

Five Recommendations for Increasing Community Resilience at any Point in Disaster Recovery

To summarize and better apply this knowledge, we believe there are five things most communities can do. Not every factor may be in your power to control, but certainly some will. And, while some of these actions are better taken before a disaster happens, it is never too late to start.

1. *Communities must work to better develop economic resources, reduce risk and resource inequities, and attend to their areas of greatest social vulnerability.*

   Cities can set aside and invest in resources that will make poor neighborhoods safer in disaster. This does not always happen and even new funds that may be devoted by other communities in the aftermath of a disaster do not always get allocated to the hardest hit areas. In preparation scenarios, each neighborhood can benefit by helping to identify appropriate strategies (often called "mitigation" in disaster circles), but even long into the recovery processes, neighborhoods are still a community unit that can be creative and work to obtain appropriate funding for the right areas.

   Given that the fair distribution of economic aid is critical, with those most needy receiving most attention, residents and grassroots leaders should be vigilant to the fairness of resource distribution. Those who need support the most may have the least

access to it. Competent communities may influence these dynamics through creative problem-solving and political action. What is most important is paying attention to this distribution, and that vigilance can allow a community group to appeal to the sense of equity others hold, and their values of cooperation, and sense of interconnectivity.

2. *Local people must be engaged meaningfully in every step of the process.*

   With good leadership, community members can assess their own vulnerabilities to the most pressing hazards, identify their own networks of assistance, and enhance their own capacities to solve problems. Often helpers will enter the community from the outside, most with good intentions. Those individuals should consistently be reminded that they can best foster recovery by allowing preexisting community members to give as much input on the process as possible. This requires a role shift on the part of outsiders, perhaps particularly professionals, from that of the supposed "expert" to that of listener and fellow participant, and when asked, a facilitator.

   Interventions should emphasize empowerment. This means that they need to emphasize strengths, mobilize the community's capabilities, and help the community to become self-sufficient, in a sustainable way. It is critical to make use of existing resources and assets. Based on the asset mapping literature, it is important to identify the helping mechanisms that are working in communities rather than seeing communities as simply a "bundle of needs."

3. *Pre-existing organizational networks and relationships are the key to rapidly mobilizing emergency and ongoing support services for disaster survivors.*

   Developing organizational networks and coalitions, as we have mentioned, can be very helpful to a disaster response. There are frequently cooperative agreements existing prior to a disaster. This could be between a local hospital and the American Red Cross, for instance, although it does not have to be a connection involving a disaster-related organization. The plans may indicate specifically how key constituencies will be involved. To work together effectively after a disaster, the groups must understand and trust each other. This can be a challenge when they have never worked together before. But any real efforts are likely to pay off.

4. *Interventions are needed that boost and protect naturally-occurring social supports in the aftermath of disasters.*

   Fostering natural supports helps to ensure that community members retain the capacity to help each other. Well-functioning social networks keep members informed about one another's needs and this communication may improve the equity of resource distribution when it really counts. Social support interventions are most effective when they mutually build additional strengths.

5. *Communities must plan for the unexpected, focusing on building flexible and trusted information and communication resources that function in the face of unknowns.*

   Uncertainty is almost certain to exist after disasters. Therefore to build a more resilient community, focus problem-solving approaches on innovation and variations that fit the local community. Resilient communities set goals and objectives but are able to modify them when new information suggests they should. This flexibility is essential.

Part III.

Working Together with Others in Your Community

A group's ability to help guide the best possible response and outcome requires planning. Planning is essential, even if it seems like there is little time. If you already have a plan in place, and a disaster has not yet occurred, that is great. But we understand that you very well may not have a plan at this time. We strongly encourage you to begin creating one, at whatever stage of recovery your community finds itself. This section will help you create a plan to better cope with the situation you currently face.

Your goal is no doubt to help generate the best response possible, through the best plan. But what does "best" mean in this case? What are the criteria for that best response? Here is one set of criteria that might help. The best response is:

- shaped by the immediate needs of your community and of the members within it.
- cost-effective. It is likely best to determine the minimum amount necessary to accomplish your goals, not only in terms of money, but of all resources, including time.
- consistent with and coordinated among the major organizations and institutions in your community. In every way, you want to avoid unnecessary duplications of your effort.
- sustainable, for as long as is necessary. This effort is focused on the long run. In some cases, this may mean the response will continue for years after the disaster. Such follow through, and ultimately endurance, is critical.
- guided by the personal needs of those receiving help, and the caregivers themselves. Community members should be personally, as well as administratively, supported.

If your response satisfies the criteria listed above, you are well on your way to generating a sound disaster response, under the circumstances.

None of these standards are easy to meet, and are much more difficult in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. We again encourage you to equally brace yourself for the long-term recovery plan. In immediate post-disaster conditions, the stress is high and the conditions are new; responses are limited; the preferred reactions at each point are particularly uncertain; and there is a significant chance of future, additional, negative events (e.g., continued flooding, fire, storm damage, aftershocks or disease outbreak).

Try to begin by sketching the roles and responsibilities of service providers and community members. The sooner the plan is filled out and introduced to (and discussed by) others, the sooner there will be common agreement about the procedures to follow. You can put in

contingency plans as needed—but the sooner the plan goes out, the sooner it will be tested in actual practice.

Here is the general outline of the immediately following sections of the Manual to help you with your plan: first, identifying those who should be involved in planning efforts for disaster recovery; second, helping to organize others and bringing them together; third, collectively deciding on an organizational structure for your planning group; and finally, linking and working together with other entities. When these tasks are accomplished, you will be better prepared to take on the necessary tasks described in later sections – assessing community needs and assets, creating action plans, choosing strategies, responding to challenges, and tracking the results of your work.

Identifying Community Leaders

In planning, get together those people who can best help in planning and executing an effective disaster response. Who are these people? How should you reach out to them? And how can you best get and keep them meeting and working together?

If a planning committee already exists, this task is largely accomplished, and your committee can swing into action immediately. Otherwise, the answers may not be immediately obvious – everyone has a role to play in a disaster; and the task of a well-functioning community is to find an appropriate role and responsibility for each and every person. Everyone may not be a planner, and not everybody will want to be one.

Your task is to bring together those who have the most interest and investment, responsibility, and knowledge—if they have resources, and influence in your community, all the better. Your aim is also to make sure everyone has the opportunity to voice their ideas and participate in the planning and action, commensurate with their interests. In other words, you want to ensure that the key people – the leaders of a community (both formal and informal leaders) – are centrally involved, and not to the exclusion of anyone.

Your eventual partners may typically include:

- Your friends and other associates; whomever you like and trust and sometimes whoever is in the closest proximity; fellow staff members in your organizations

- Local leaders of civic and other community organizations

- Elected officials in your community, for instance, the Mayor, or City or Town Manager along with other elected representatives—City or Town Council, Alderpersons, and Supervisors

- Police, people in the fire department, Fire Chiefs, and/or Public Safety Chief

- Members of and the head of the local board of health
- One or more representatives from local hospitals and clinics
- One or more representatives from those providing ambulance services or other emergency transport
- Educators at all levels including representatives and others from the School Committee or Board
- You may also want representation from the Chamber of Commerce, or other major local businesses; major media outlets; church leaders, and/or the head of the local Interfaith Council; heads of key nonprofit agencies, especially those that are health-related or disability-related; and leaders of prominent neighborhood or resident groups that might be focused, for instance, on nursing homes, prisons, or public housing. Many communities are mandated to create a crisis response effort, but that is usually focused on emergency response and not about long-term recovery efforts, and of course the quality of the coordination varies greatly.

Again, include anyone who you feel has something to provide in terms of leadership and whose moral decision-making seems to be in the right place. Everyone in the community will have a stake in the outcome, and mechanisms for more fully involving them must be developed as well. Some ideas for how this might take place are described in the last part of this section, under Linking to and Working with Other Groups.

It may take you just a few minutes to create a complete list, with names and contact information, but it doesn't hurt to help fill out such a list by consulting town directories and other information sources—check with others, make some calls, we what is called "snowballing" these social network efforts by asking others who else might be good to include. It is usually less important that your list be perfect than to contact people, and get the group together and to get to work.

Organizing Your Community and Engaging Members

Once you have identified the key community members to be involved, a next step is to bring them together to create and implement a plan of action.

Calling a Meeting

To bring your group together, you need to call a meeting. The first meeting of your group will be especially important, since it will set the tone for all future work. That means careful thought and preparation should go into the first meeting itself.

Having a first meeting face-to-face ensures everyone can interact, meet with those they might not know, and reacquaint themselves with those they do. A face-to-face meeting shows a sign of commitment – "If I've made the effort to be physically present (the reasoning goes), and so have my colleagues, it must be important." Problems and even minor difficulties that arise can get sorted out then and there.

In future meetings with working technology, email, conference call, and listserv posted comments can occur. But face-to-face meetings, when they are possible, are invaluable.

Time is precious, especially for community leaders, people need to decide where to spend their time for the best investment. In your consistent invitation attempts, you want to work toward having:

- A clear stated purpose for your meetings, with statements about the specific outcomes desired.

- The described importance of the invitee's presence; your message should emphasize that the invitee's position and abilities will be essential in your group's operation; the invitee's skills, ideas, and participation will be both valuable and needed.

- The emphasis that others present will be serious and invested.

- Communication of the invitation message more than once, as a reminder. To make sure the word gets out, you can also transmit it over locally shared media (newspapers, bulletins, or list servers) and through other communication channels.

- Provision of adequate lead time, so that invitees can mark their schedules to attend. An RSVP is useful, at least the first time around, to bolster participant commitment and to give you a sense, in advance, of who will be present.

At the Meeting Itself

You have probably attended other meetings. You probably have a pretty good sense of what makes a good meeting and what does not. But there are some basic principles for facilitating a meeting that tends to make them productive and satisfies all those who attend. Below are some of these ideas:

- The meeting should start on time and have an agreed-upon ending time.

- The meeting should follow an agenda. Ideally, that agenda should be distributed to all members in advance. In many cases, the agenda may also note the approximate amount of time to be spent on each agenda item.

- There should be a designated chair. Unless the group decides otherwise, that person would normally continue to chair future meetings for an agreed-upon time period.

- There should be prior agreement on who will take notes, and how they will be reliably distributed to members.

- At a first meeting, introductions should be made, so that all members get a chance to briefly state their name and affiliation. A written contact list may also be distributed.

- The chair often begins with some brief opening remarks stating the overall purpose of the meeting, reviewing the agenda, and highlighting key points needing discussion and/or decision. The chair may also ask for corrections and additions to the agenda at that time.

- The meeting should then proceed with agenda items in the order in which they are given, unless there is good reason to deviate.

- As the meeting progresses, the chair should keep close track of time, allotting time to each agenda item roughly proportional to its importance. The chair should keep to that rough allotment, unless the group moves faster than expected, or decides to give a particular item additional time.

- The chair should ensure that all speakers are heard, and are heard openly, respectfully, and fairly. At the same time, the chair is responsible for ensuring that the meeting stays on track, without undue digression or repetition. When someone speaks out of turn, interrupts, makes the same point repeatedly, or engages in personal comments, it's the chair's job to politely but firmly steer the meeting back to the task at hand. That can take sensitivity and skill – which is why very careful attention should be paid to who will chair a disaster recovery meeting. If desired, ground rules or guidelines for meeting conduct and procedures can later be established, agreed upon, and possibly distributed ahead of future meetings.

- Toward the end of the meeting, there should be agreement on what tasks need to be done prior to the next meeting, and who will do them. This will help form the agenda for the next meeting.

- At the end, the chair, with group input, should set the next meeting's date, time, and place. Printed meeting notification, with minutes and the next agenda attached, should subsequently follow.

- Just before the meeting closes, the chair may ask for feedback on the meeting just held, so that improvements in future meeting procedures can be made.

- Every meeting should end with a reminder of action steps and tasks assigned to specific individuals and groups.

- To the best extent possible, the meeting should conclude on a positive note, with appreciation expressed to group members for their contributions. An informal social period might then follow.

These guidelines are not meant to be rigid – each community, and each situation is different – but in a disaster situation, there is little time and energy to waste. Clear and structured procedures for your group's operation will help you be as efficient as you reasonably can.

To implement these principles, you don't have to be a charismatic leader. Success here is in good part a matter of technique. Get agreement on the guidelines you choose, and follow them; check back with others after meetings to ensure future movement in the right direction; and get the personal support of people in your group, if you will be the one who will continue to lead it.

After the Meeting

Even if your first meeting was the best it could be, disaster work usually requires many meetings. After that meeting, your planning group members will need to keep coming back (and to do some work between meetings). They will need to stay involved, active, and contributing over what might be an extended time. All of that calls for commitment of a different magnitude. To generate that commitment, certain basic principles again apply:

- Group members need to feel that their group is accomplishing something, that progress is being made, that they are not just having philosophical discussions (however insightful they may be) without clear results. For members spending time in this group, they will ask themselves, "Is the group producing enough positive community outcomes in return for this investment?" In an ongoing group, the answer to that question must be "Yes."

- Members also need to feel that they *themselves* are making specific contributions. People can experience a greater sense of fulfillment by feeling part of a larger cause. Even if group processes are moving smoothly, a member may wonder if he or she is personally contributing. Members are more likely to keep coming and investing in the process if they have a particular role to play, or a distinctive function that few others could fill. Their questions will be: "Am I doing something useful at this meeting?" (We hope they'll say "Yes.") And "Could someone else do the same job equally well?" (We hope they'll think, "Well, maybe not.") The group's leader should regularly reinforce these beliefs, so that everyone feels valued and appreciated.

- Beyond their task contributions, members should get social satisfaction from participating. They should feel that being at the meetings is a rewarding experience,

> over and above any actions that may be decided upon and executed. That doesn't mean that each meeting must be a lively social occasion; but it should mean that people like the company of the others around them, that they enjoy the informal conversations that are bound to happen before, during, and after the meetings, and that the meeting environment is as pleasant as possible. Those same social bonds within a group can also spur a member to greater contribution, or deter a wavering member from withdrawing or dropping out. As we've all learned early on, peer pressure in groups is a powerful force.

In sum, what keeps us in groups, both disaster-related groups and others, are positive group outcomes, personal contributions, and social satisfaction – or at least the strong expectations that these will happen. All three conditions are important. Even if you are working mostly behind the scenes, your task as a group leader is to help ensure those conditions are met.

Choosing an Organizational Structure

As soon as possible in your planning group's existence, it's wise to pay attention to your group's structure. By structure, we mean how a group is organized, who leads it, where the decision-making power lies, and how that power is made accountable.

What is meant by "as soon as possible"? Ideally, it's even before the disaster, which would be the case if your planning group had already been formed. But if your group is a new one, some proposals for your group's structure can be suggested by your planning group's coordinator, and then circulated to members for review, comment, and at least informal adoption before a first meeting is held. The sooner your group can agree on a structure, even unofficially, the sooner it will be able to develop and implement effective responses to the situation at hand.

And why is a structure important? In a disaster situation, time is of the essence. Fast action is often necessary. Your group's number one task should be generating that action. If everyone's role is clear, if everyone knows how group meetings will work, if everyone understands how decisions will be made, your group's time and energy is freed to respond to the immediate tasks at hand.

If such procedures are unclear, it's quite likely that valuable time may be lost in disagreements about how the group should work. But when your group's structure is known by everyone, there are better chances that your group will work more efficiently. Furthermore, when members agree that the structure is fair, opinions will be more openly voiced, and better decisions – and more effective actions – are likely to occur.

Yet the simple existence of a structure will not ensure good decisions, for there are many types of structure to choose from. Committees, or smaller groups, can be asked to take on more specialized tasks. Discussions before a decision is made may be brief or extensive. Community input into decisions may range from considerable to nonexistent (we hope considerable, but not necessarily on every issue). The decisions themselves may be made by majority vote, by

consensus, or by authority implicitly or explicitly granted to the leaders. And operations in general may be tightly controlled from the top, or may allow, or encourage, autonomy from smaller groups in different sections or neighborhoods in the community.

Effective structures can take many different forms. No single best structure exists for every group in every circumstance. And don't let these formalities deter you from action. No piece is essential. That said, how might you begin going about designing a rough structure that is best suited to your group? To help answer this question, you can consider the following characteristics, some of which will be a review:

Characteristics of an Effective Organizational Structure

Responsive to the needs of the situation and to the community.

Effective in getting decisions made.

Acceptable to the group members.

Accountable to the larger community it represents.

Flexible, so that it can adjust according to the particular situation.

Inclusive, allowing everyone who wants to participate to do so in some way that capitalizes upon their skills and interests.

Tested, when possible, to assess how well it works in real practice, then adjusted as necessary.

Reviewed periodically, to check whether the above standards are being met.

These standards also apply to most groups, but a disaster situation creates additional circumstances that should be taken into account:

- Decisions must often be made quickly; the consequences of undue delay can sometimes be serious.
- Decisions must sometimes be made on the basis of incomplete information.
- Not everyone may have access to all relevant information, even when it is incomplete.
- Decisions must be communicated rapidly and efficiently to the community at large.

Putting these factors together, they suggest a disaster group structure that might have four distinct characteristics:

1. There should be as much participation and deliberation as circumstances allow; but the leadership should be authorized to act swiftly when needed.

2. Since a central planning group cannot do the job alone, there should be a well-defined structure for getting information to other community groups and those who need to know. A backup structure would be wise in case the primary structure is not operative. They could take the form of emails, or of broadcast telephone or cell phone messages, or of a multilevel communication tree, or (often better) some combination of these. The key point is that the structure must be spelled out and made known so that everyone can get the information they need.

3. Whatever the structure, it is vital to have clear, swift communication for your central planning group and others throughout the community, will be vital. Frequent conferences, once a day or more, may also be needed, depending on the current situation.

4. Finally, your structure should emphasize the need for feedback, and such feedback must be available, well-defined, and well-publicized. If the governing decisions will be top-down, they should be subject to feedback from the bottom up.

Linking to and Working with Other Groups

As noted, a central planning group cannot do its job in isolation. It will need to work together with other, associated groups. The question then becomes: what are the best ways to form and maintain desired linkages, and to work with those groups?

A starting strategy is to identify other groups in the community that can work in parallel with the central planning group. Many of those groups are of two basic types.

One type may be groups performing specialized tasks that you help decide upon – such as provision of food, shelter, medical care, transportation, counseling, or publicity. The central planning group can help form those groups; define their roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority, ensuring that each one has a designated leader. The leader of that task group would then get guidance from, and send messages to, the central group. A housing subgroup, for example, might be in charge of shelter. It might report to the central planning group, but it could also call upon that and other groups to help locate more beds.

Depending on your community's size, each sector or neighborhood might identify certain task groups that are led by their own designated representatives. These can be called "parallel groups" that are responsible for their own geographic areas. They can be charged with identifying needs and directing resources to that location, as well as taking the lead in identifying assets and resources on the scene. Who owns a generator, for example? And who is a nurse?

Some areas of the U.S. and other nations already have Community Emergency Response Teams (See the appendix for a description). When such geographic groups are already in place, it's useful to work directly with them, rather than forming new groups from scratch. But when they don't exist, it may be helpful to recruit one or more well-regarded, neighborhood-based representatives who will perform the above functions. For this arrangement to work well, ongoing coordination among all stakeholders—between the neighborhood groups and the central planning group, and among the neighborhood groups themselves—will be required. One or more members of the central planning group might take responsibility for overseeing and maintaining such coordination.

By following these steps, close linkages can be made and maintained with different parts of the community, both by function and by geography. Local needs can then be more easily identified and met, while resources can be more easily located and delivered. Your community may have particular qualities – of size, of history, of social or cultural pattern, of existing organization, or of skills – that will suggest a different linkage structure. As with the central planning group itself, one size will not fit all.

What's most important is that the central planning group avoids taking on too much, and taps into the abilities and skills of others in the community who are closer to the scene on a street-by-street and moment-to-moment level, and are in a position to help.

Whatever linkage arrangements you decide upon, it's also essential to communicate their existence to the community at large – so if there is a need in a particular area, people know how to report it and whom to report it to, while those receiving requests will know how the best response can get made and take responsibility for making it.

In other words, it's essential not only to have an efficient linkage structure in place, but also for everyone in the community to know what it is and how to access and utilize it. Clear, swift, continuous, and multi-way communication is at the heart of making any linkages work.

There are several more points to consider about forming community linkages:

In addition to the linkages above, it's also desirable to be in close communication with other community groups who might not otherwise be included. Some examples might be church groups, service clubs, ethnic organizations, school groups, and parent groups. A central planning group can suggest ways for these organizations to get involved, and encourage each to designate a representative who will stay in touch with the group's membership and relay information up and down the communication chain. It may be desirable to identify some members of these groups to be on call, or to possibly help create a hotline to receive suggestions or requests.

The group may want to hold regular open public meetings, both to communicate updated information and to hear comments from attendees. It's natural that some of those comments

may be critical. Critical comments (as well as praise) should be seen as desirable; for in a disaster recovery effort it's almost inevitable that improvements can be made. Praise is always rewarding to hear, but constructive criticism can be rewarding in a different way, since it presents an opportunity for helpful ideas about new directions.

Summary

In this section, we have provided some guidance on identifying key community leaders, getting and keeping them involved in a planning group, choosing an organizational structure, and linking with other groups throughout the community. When any of these tasks are accomplished successfully, your community will have made major progress toward effective disaster recovery.

To help build upon your accomplishments, we now turn our attention to more detailed disaster recovery activities you and your planning group might undertake, beginning with identifying community needs and assets.

Part IV.

Assessing Community Needs and Assets

Why Conduct a Community Assessment?

This section of the Manual comes after the more social task of bringing people together. Yet it is among the first things you will begin working on. By assessment here we are not referring here to any highly formal set of procedures. Nor are we talking yet about the type of assessment that involves collecting data around your own work, although we will make some suggestions of this sort in a later section. Here we are more concerned with surveying the landscape in your community and describing practical strategies of post-disaster community assessment. This can set your group up to make the best decisions in organizing and planning, right from the start.

In the wake of a disaster, the pressure to act can be overwhelming. In the short-term, spending valuable time and resources in gathering information may seem like a waste of energy, particularly if doing so results in a delayed response to survivors. Even over longer periods of time, our emphasis here, investing time and effort in assessment may seem difficult to justify in the face of pressing needs for recovery assistance.

There are several other important reasons for conducting assessments to inform your disaster response and recovery efforts:

Assessment is simply about taking a good look at the situation, seeing what is needed, seeing what you resources you have, and where you can get other needs met. *Well-conducted assessments can increase the effectiveness of the recovery efforts.* Without understanding the needs and assets of a community, there is a risk of providing less than effective forms of help. Assessment strengthens efforts, over time, to make sure the right needs are being addressed and the people who need it most are helped. For example, without a community assessment, counseling might be emphasized where physical—not psychological—needs are more immediate. Food supplies might be wasted if they are not suited to local cultural preferences (e.g., dietary restrictions). Even if the right type of help—in shape and form—is delivered, it may not reach those most in need if efforts have not been made to identify all segments of the community.

Well-conducted assessments can increase the perceived sensitivity of recovery efforts and build community trust in the overall project. Particularly where helpers are perceived as "outsiders," genuine efforts to help can sometimes be rebuffed if community members believe that their needs and assets are inadequately understood. Thus, efforts that would otherwise be helpful can be undermined due to lack of cooperation. Community members may perceive such poorly informed efforts as insensitive and alienating. Therefore community assessments can be particularly helpful when it is evident they are adequately inclusive of all community members.

Finally, assessments can help you provide more effective guidance to other helpers and helping professionals in the community. They can provide guidance on local priorities, signify where individuals with particular needs tend to live, and suggest resources to use in intervention efforts, all helpful factors for those outside the community who are developing their own recovery plans.

Guidelines for Community Assessment

Community assessment approaches can vary based on the particulars of the community, the type of disaster, and the assessment resources available. Community assessments can be most effective when they try to follow the basic steps described in this section. As with so much else in a disaster scenario the steps will not always proceed smoothly in an orderly sequence. Instead you will more likely find yourself and your decision making cycling through steps and often returning back to the beginning again. Nevertheless, some approximate sequence is provided here:

1. Clarify the elements and your exact focus of your recovery efforts.

What community can most benefit from your efforts? Is it your neighborhood block? The most vulnerable population in this specific disaster? Focus is important given that psychological and other types of resources are almost always limited. To more fully narrow your focus, you may want to think about other important situational factors involved such as the specific type of disaster, the stage of recovery, and what the most pressing issues in this instance seem to be.

2. Identify the assets of your community.

The developers of asset-based methodologies have wisely encouraged those involved in the community to not simply see their communities as "bundles of needs." There is a value at times to reframe the situation and instead focus on identifying "assets." This is true in disaster scenarios as anywhere else. What are the assets in your community? What are the assets that individuals hold? This can be practical strengths such as cooking, carpentry or repair skills, or "people skills," such as networks, organizing or speaking abilities. Consider the resources of neighborhood groups or organizations, local businesses, physical or mental health providers or agencies, schools, and places of worship. Identifying these strengths will expand the pool of resources available to assist with recovery.

3. Determine the remaining needs.

Starting with a frame of "assets" helps. Nevertheless, many resource-based strengths of a community can be lost in a disaster. What needs remain? Can any be taken care of through the previously identified assets? Some needs must be provided for from the outside. Even in later-term stages of recovery, food, housing assistance, physical, mental health, social, and/or spiritual support may be needed. Compile that list.

4. Locate those remaining resources.

Given the lists of community strengths and remaining needs, how will you locate those remaining needs? After you have assessed your community's needs, decide what resources are required to fill those needs. This step is frequently overlooked. Identify the specific individuals who hold or have access to the resource you need. It is insufficient to merely target a system for advocacy. You need to identify and directly communicate with the individual who can provide the needed resources. And the most obvious ones might not be the best ones. If an area of unmet need is income generation for individuals or families, the first resource that might come to mind is potential employment opportunities or jobs—but helping families create their own business or micro-enterprises may be a more strategic path. Brainstorm to generate as large and complete a list of alternatives as possible. Move beyond the obvious solutions and explore the pros and cons of each and every possible resource you can think of. Next, prioritize what resources would be most beneficial. In this process, try to think about one other consideration as well. What is the probability that, once acquired, the specific resource(s) will actually fulfill the unmet needs?

5. Figure out how to best obtain those resources.

An upcoming section is about creating an action plan, and in many ways that is what your assessment tasks are leading up to. Once you have identified the complete situation the next task is to put it into action. This point foreshadows that action. Ask yourself what factors would be involved with the critical individual or institution who possesses the resources that would make them most responsive to your requests. What would most likely lead to the procurement of your desired resources? What are the factors that would make the individual most responsive? What strategies would be most likely to help you obtain the resources? Obviously, you will need a good deal of information about the targeted individual and organization in order to make decisions about the best strategies to be used during your advocacy effort.

Finding and Using External Sources of Information

Before we get to the creation of the action plan, we have one more area under assessment. Community organizations often need all sorts of information after a disaster. Information itself is a critical resource. Frequently, some of what is needed can be found on the web. In some cases after a disaster, the internet is the only place that important information, forms and documents can be found. In the early days after a disaster access to the internet can be compromised. Power and connectivity will be restored in good time. When you personally do not have internet access, libraries usually have public access. Yet many disaster survivors are going to lack access to computers and internet service. When that common inaccessibility occurs, you or other community service and advocacy organizations may want to find the sites to download and share such valuable documents widely.

A guide to useful disaster-related sites can also be found in the Appendix, but search tools like Google or ask.com will often bring up the information resources desired. Here is a brief list of some of the questions you might want answered:

- What areas have suffered most from the disaster? How severe was the damage in these areas? How can you map these areas using the internet and use those maps to match people to services?
- What are the current threats to public health and safety?
- How much property damage and loss of housing occurred and where?
- What are the best sources of aid for immediate emergency assistance and recovery?
- What volunteer opportunities exist or who is looking for volunteer work?
- What are the federal, state and local policies on compensation and aid?
- Where do people apply for emergency housing?
- Who is gathering information about the disaster, and what information is being gathered?
- What are the ways to contact those affected by the disaster?
- What information is there on access to government or other voluntary organization assistance?
- What guidelines exist for dealing with threats to health and safety?
- What guidelines can be found about safe and healthy clean-up procedures after a disaster?
- What coping or recovery guides are there for enhancing stress management skills and for promoting post-disaster physical and mental health?

Evaluating the Quality of Information

The information from government web sites tend to be quite sound. Professional associations and college or university web sites are also usually reliable sources. The information on some such sites can be hard to locate or simply hard to understand. Your group may find a role in finding, translating, and disseminating this information.

Other general forms of information may seem useful, but they need to be checked for reliability. You can always find the sponsoring organization's homepage and check the organizational mandate, history, structure of officers, and projects.

Search for contact information on the site and call the telephone number listed to inquire about data sources: How does the site validate information? What is the purpose of the site? And what organizations or individuals sponsor the site?

When services are offered, it is a good idea to call the contact information given and find out whether the services are in fact available, applicable conditions, and the eligibility criteria.

Other sites may advertise costly interventions or trainings with bold claims of their effectiveness. Their claims might be true, but it is worth checking with a local or national trusted source of information to be sure. Even in an emergency—particularly in an emergency—you should always be a good consumer of information and any promises.

If the information you need seems more technical than your group is comfortable with, consider asking those in community colleges or universities, and seek out individuals at the organizations whose names are provided in the Appendix.

Part V.

Making an Action Plan

Whenever knowledge is obtained it has little effect without good implementation. The difference between good and less effective forms of community action is in planning and then following through with implementing the plans in the real world. Whether you work for a service organization or are trying to do much of this work out of your house, your ability to help your community recover from disaster will be improved by developing a good action plan and putting those plans into action.

Developing an action plan is the natural next step after assessing the needs that are out there and deciding the challenges your group will address. After collecting information in the assessment phase, you are in a position to think about how you can use that information most effectively. For instance, what activities need to get done? In what time frame? What are some further tips on coordinating people to help accomplish these tasks?

It is often worth taking the time to write an action plan. Committing such a plan to paper or electronic document helps ensure your next steps will be as judicious as possible, making the best use of all efforts and time. Writing an action plan can help clarify your thoughts and ideas. Breaking down tasks into their component parts can increase your ability to carry out those tasks. It also improves the quality of feedback from others and provides everyone with a better chance of getting on the same page, literally. *(At the end of Part VII: How to Track Your Results, a tracking evaluation sheet is provided as an example that may also seem useful as a model for creating your action plan.)*

Choosing Achievable Goals

When designing an action plan, make your immediate goals and your objectives or tasks achievable. As mentioned in the preceding section, focus is important. We would never want to discourage your highest hopes and biggest plans. Yet deciding what is reasonable to accomplish can have a significant impact on your success. To decide what is achievable, consider your current context, resources, and time. Order your goals from what can be most easily and quickly accomplished up to your more grand hopes. Accomplish each step-by-step, one at a time.

Community psychologists often emphasize “small wins.” If you can help obtain a single building with multiple units to house several families in need, you have accomplished a miraculous task. Definite, concrete achievements can be powerful. Think big, but design practical steps. When you and your team members see the reality of that “small win,” the feeling of achievement can be motivating. The group can then tackle designs for obtaining more housing units, or branch out to seek food or medical help for the families in the building, or wherever else your next assessment may lead you.

Outlining Components of an Action Plan

Step 1 Outlining

To begin creating your plan based on your assessment, start creating a rough outline or draw diagrams and make it as visually oriented as possible. You want to continually re-ask and re-focus the current plan through questions like the following:

- What are our objectives?
- How can those aims be broken down as concretely as possible?
- How does the most current assessment of the situation suggest?
- What are the next action steps?
- Who else can we bring in to help achieve these goals?
- What has to be done first? What's next? Then what?
- Who will contact who first? Second?
- What timelines make sense? What can be done today? What about next week? What would be great to have achieved in a month from now? In a year?

Step 2 Strategy Selection

In order to effectively select strategies that will produce the outcomes needed, it is important to explore a variety of choices. There are certain things you want to do and certain things you don't want to do (often what you choose not to do is as important as what you choose to do). You may also conceptualize your strategy choices ranging from individual to policy-level strategies.

You may attempt to gain the good favor of the critical person or agency in control of the needed resource. You could also choose a consultation strategy in which information would be provided to the critical individual or agency about the area of unmet needs. If there is a serious, ongoing injustice you may decide to take peaceful but direct action toward a group who is not listening to the critical needs. In every case, we recommend positive approaches to all, even when more confrontational strategies are necessary.

At the *individual* level, you may identify the critical person in control of needed resources and attempt to positively influence that individual. At the *administrative* level, you may identify a critical agency in control of the needed resources and direct the advocacy strategies there. At the *policy* level, you identify some political or social system that is responsible for the lacking resource and work toward bringing about enduring, policy/system changes.

In every case, you are going to be targeting and working with individuals on the advocacy efforts, not just amorphous systems. The actual combinations of strategies that could result are

practically endless and depend on the situation, the people involved, the resource in question, and the people controlling the particular resource.

Seeking Feedback and Modifying the Plan

After several reconfigurations of the plan, and adding some new linkages and ideas, you have a draft. Once again ask, is this realistic? From what you know now: Is this reasonably important? Can it have an impact? Can you achieve these first steps in sequence? If not, continue to refine the draft; the more you break tasks down, the better.

Breaking elements down can bring the work into greater focus. It helps you think about linkages, and how resources or people can be rearranged or consolidated in a more effective way. This will always remain a rough map; religious adherence to your plan is not necessary.

The plan will help you articulate a vision to others, and to collect further input from others, particularly community leaders and stakeholders who will help implement the plan. It helps provide a "reality check" and can result in greater "buy-in"—that is, helping your partners feel a greater investment in the overall project and the tasks to be completed.

The action plan serves the action itself. It's a tool to motivate you and others. Knowing what you want to do can help enhance your leadership skills, make you more confident about on-the-fly decisions, and help encourage everyone to accomplish shared goals.

Despite these natural inclinations to accomplish everything at once, we cannot over-emphasize the importance of having a focused scope to your goals and action steps. The broadest and most ambitious plans require carefully thought-out choices, one step at a time. It is important to pace everyone's energies, including your own. By accomplishing smaller tasks, everyone can tangible victories. The action plan helps you envision the bigger picture, and therefore the best way to proceed.

Implementing the Plan

Your efforts to mobilize resources should be governed by the general principle of action. You will need to be outgoing, persistent, and insistent in your efforts to mobilize resources for your community. Advocacy efforts require personal contact with others. Become aware of the style of the individual you will be trying to convince, and it can help facilitate your entry into the system. You want to be positive and to objectively state your arguments for community needs. Being positive does not mean you will agree with the positions made nor that you are going to be co-opted by the local social service, legal, health, or employment systems. If you are intricately aware of their modes of operation, existing resources can be obtained and then used in the most beneficial way.

In addition to direct advocacy efforts via personal contact, you may also be involved in indirect advocacy efforts. This will involve phone calls, correspondence, and contacts with others closely

affiliated with the critical people and organizations. Making connections—find out who knows someone else who may be helpful—is often a very effective way of working through and around the system.

The action plan guides your mission. It is not cast in stone but is rather a "living document," always subject to change based on how reality informs your next steps. The changing landscape, common in post-disaster recovery situations, will continue to demand trial and error efforts. The action plan, though, will hopefully reduce both the trial and the error.

People differ in how their goals relate to their subsequent actions. Some people benefit greatly from goals and others may find goals and timelines intimidating. The latter group may follow the Swedish proverb of climbing the mountain, attributed to a Statesman and United Nations official: "*Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was."* You may choose not to think about the enormity of the task ahead. But an action plan gives you a better sense of your target path and the eventual destination. If the goals are not achieved, or if you decide to switch your strategies altogether, that's fine. We encourage a cyclical process: get the best information you can, make your plan, implement it, revise the plan, and start again. In fact, if you don't encounter some obstacles, you are probably not taking enough risks. That is when you might want to return to your drawing board and expand the focus of your goals. Challenges and setbacks should be embraced—they are inevitable.

When you achieve *small wins*, consistently remind yourself of those little victories. Let others know about these shared successes. Small wins can bring the sense of optimism, the sense of collective efficacy mentioned earlier, that will move your group toward progress.

Mobilizing Resources and Advocating for Your Community

Mobilizing resources will be essential in order to achieve the goals you and your community identify together. Although there is no quick, easy way to get the resources you need, here are five useful steps you can take:

Five Step to Mobilize Resources

1. *Assess Needs and Resources*
2. *Select Your Strategy*
3. *Implement*
4. *Monitor*
5. *Engage in Secondary Advocacy*

One final example related to assessment: In one camp for Katrina survivors, FEMA (the main federal disaster agency) sent in representatives from HUD (housing and urban development) to assist in finding housing for those in the camp. During the first week there were about 1,500 survivors in the camp. HUD did not use an assessment tool to evaluate the types of housing and

income levels of the survivors from New Orleans who had come to the camp. The assumption was that most of the people were eligible for Section 8 housing (a federal rent reduction program for individuals who meet various socioeconomic criteria, including low income). This was not the case. Only about 20 individuals had an income level that would make them eligible for this type of housing. Instead these were working people who made low salaries, but above the level of eligibility required for the program. Because an assessment of income and jobs was not done to determine housing specific factors that operated in New Orleans, there was alienation among the survivors and from the local group of first responders. The solution was provided by a group, the Ministerial Alliance. They organized churches and other religious bodies throughout the state to provide housing. They also helped get a job for each family who needed housing and who was not eligible for Section 8 or who had not found a place to live. They developed a screening tool and referral system. After the camp closed, they wrote a grant and received foundation funding to systematize their system and to do follow-up with the families they placed.

Part VI.

Types of Communities and Outreach to Diverse Groups

When people use the term *community,* what do they mean? Whose community are they talking about? There are different meanings depending upon the type of community. For example, where people live, worship, go to school, shop, or work are distinct types of communities. These communities have a building structure, addresses, phone number, and can be found by outsiders. If you are doing a community assessment, you will most likely be able to easily find these communities. However, the term *community* can also describe a group of people who share common characteristics, heritage, or purpose. Examples are people who are Iraq war veterans, Mexican Americans, or hotel employees. On a more abstract level are communities that are formed by shared values, norms, interests, and experiences. People voluntarily can join these communities because they want to belong to them. For example, people may choose to join one type of social organization versus another or one faith-based community versus another.

All types of communities are complex. People simultaneously belong to multiple communities with different types of people at different times in their lives. As such, some communities are more visible than others for doing community assessments.

Visible Communities of People

The following are some examples of communities that are more salient:

- *Geographic communities.* These communities have specific land boundaries. Some may use the term *neighborhood* instead of *community* for this definition. People who live in the particular geographic area often have a common name for their community and identify with that name. For example, after Hurricane Katrina, the Lower Ninth Ward was one of the communities devastated by the disaster. Geographically defined communities vary by size of the area, population density, location, resources, abundance or absence of institutions, safety, and other social factors that can influence the quality of life for people who live in there. The other types of visible communities discussed below can be within a geographic community.

- *Age-based communities.* Youth and people who go to work can be more visible in a community than many seniors. Youth are seen going to school or hanging out somewhere. Working people who leave home are visible to others. While seniors may be more or less visible in a community they can live in age specific senior housing communities where they can be found in large numbers. Age-based communities are important to recognize because different age groups can have specific needs that should be assessed in recovery efforts (see Outreach to Older Adults).

- *Ethnically diverse and ethnically similar communities.* Communities that are ethnically diverse may have diverse levels of income and education. However, this should be assessed in a post-disaster community assessment, because wealthier communities have access to more resources. Ethnically similar communities inhabited by Latino, African American, Native American, and other ethnically or racially marginalized groups have historically been victims of racism, discrimination, and may have lower income levels. The disaster response will need to be sensitive to issues of trust and mistrust based on the historical and present-day experiences of these communities.

- *Language minority communities*. Communities where most of the residents are non-English speakers require same-language disaster responders and community members who can help negotiate between the community and the disaster response efforts. We call these people *culture brokers*. This type of community is visible because the language spoken is heard. However, in English dominant communities, people who are not English dominant speakers may not wish to come forward to access services. Many times it is because of fear or a lack of understanding of what assistance is available. Other times it can be related to issues such as immigration status.

Communities within Communities

The following examples are of communities that can be invisible or not readily obvious. This list is not exhaustive. Rather, the list is presented to stimulate thinking regarding groups that are not immediately visible following a disaster. Shortly, we will discuss possible outreach efforts for several of these groups, some of which have different types of vulnerabilities and equally strengths.

- *Non-documented persons in the community*. Fear of deportation will make these communities difficult to reach for disaster response. These communities are also stigmatized.

- *Stigmatized communities.* Individuals belonging to groups who have experienced stigmatization or discrimination may have more difficulty accessing services. Examples are ethnic and racial minority communities, poor communities, certain religious communities (e.g. Muslims), and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities. The homeless may be visible or invisible. For example, the homeless who have jobs but no housing and who live in shelters or their cars at night are less visible.

- *Persons with disabling conditions*. These are people who can have physical or mental disabilities that are not immediately obvious, for example, the deaf.

- *Occupational-specific communities*. Community members may possess occupational skills that are helpful in a disaster. However, these skills are often not assessed. For

example, engineers, carpenters, or health care providers can be utilized for knowledge of the community and for their skills for help in disaster recovery.

Key community members will be helpful in identifying the above-mentioned types of communities. However, they should not be the only source of this information. Persons needing recovery assistance should also be asked to identify community groups needing help. They can also be useful in community assessment to evaluate the needs of the community accurately. You can find observation alone also very helpful. Walk the community as a participant observer, noting the way people live and relate to each other and their physical surroundings. The information gained will help inform community assessment efforts.

Community Factors that Influence Disaster Response.

All of the communities identified above are influenced by the following factors:

- Whether diverse groups within a community are equally valued, and if not, which groups are marginalized
- The social support provided to invisible groups and subgroups within the community
- The ability of the community to access internal and external resources
- The level of pre-existing tensions in the community and/or cooperation
- Formal vs. informal relations (e.g., is information openly shared among members of the community or only held by a few)
- Formal vs. informal structures in the community (e.g., how do the governmental agencies relate to schools or neighborhood organizations?)
- Power rests in the hands of a few or is shared among many in a more participatory fashion
- Prior advocacy initiatives aimed at community concerns
- Quality of life issues prior to the disaster (crime, transportation, health care, owner occupied vs. rental housing, etc.)

The success of post-disaster recovery requires collecting information about these factors to develop and shape a community-sensitive recovery effort.

Outreach to Diverse Groups

By outreach we simply mean reaching out to others in the community, sometimes because others need it, sometimes because we need everyone we can get to help out and collaborate.

Sometimes a disaster impacts all members of a community or sectors of a society equally. More often than not, certain groups disproportionately bear the brunt of the suffering and loss, magnifying these disparities. It is often the case that some members of the community that have had greater access to resources and services prior to the disaster. Inequality can lead to a sense of competition for limited resources between groups, or distrust of government authority or recovery personnel. Depending on the context and climate, working collaboratively with various constituencies across ethnic, religious, economic and political lines may require special attention. Engendering trust among underrepresented groups requires recognition of past injustices, clear communication, and sincere efforts to avoid perpetuating those injustices. Taking some time to reflect on your own group membership and role in dismantling or maintaining the status quo may also help you become more effective in conducting outreach and building coalitions. Sometimes you may be a member of an underrepresented group, other times you will not. Whether you are an official member of a community or not should never deter your interest in trying to part of the helping process.

This section focuses on a variety of subgroups in a community, some that tend to be isolated in a particular area such as students within a school, to others that can often be found in specific geographic locations within a community. The goal of this section is to talk about outreach, to a wide variety of different types of communities and to many specific or specialized communities that may require special acknowledgement and consideration during a disaster.

Assessing and Reducing Barriers in Working with Diverse Groups

There are several things you can do to assess and reduce barriers to working with diverse groups:

- Understand current needs and realities of target groups.
    - Nobody knows a group or culture better than the members of that particular group. If you are not a member of this group and do not have much familiarity or haven't interacted with the particular community before, learn what you can about the group in question by going to the source. Through direct interaction and dialogue you can determine what, in general, are the community's strengths and their most pressing needs and concerns. You can attempt to partner with specific target groups to resolve some of the most immediate needs. You can continue to build trust needed to address larger scale issues over the long term. If members of a group see that you recognize and understand their concerns and prioritize them in both in the short- and long-term, almost all members will see

you as deservingly cooperative and trusting, even though this trust may take some time to build.

- Assess and discuss levels of mistrust.
    - Our focus here is not on first response, but even in the longer-term disaster recovery process, you may find community members who are unlikely to seek resources. Others may simply give up quickly in the face of certain bureaucracies or because they lack confidence in the institution's likelihood of offering them adequate assistance. Sit down with the members from your target group, have an open discussion about what it is you or your group is attempting to do, and listen to what has been their experience up to this point and whether or not they are hesitant to participate or take on a leadership role in the recovery efforts.
- Recognize and respect differing cultural beliefs and practices.
    - Speak to those in high regard in their cultures to understand why certain beliefs and practices exist. It will be easier to relate to others and additionally gain their trust. It is a way to discover common ground for discussion in the early stages of gaining rapport.
- Find community gatekeepers and request their involvement.
    - Focusing your energy on a few trusted community leaders can be the most effective and efficient way to gain support from a group you do not know well. For example, in schools, gatekeepers may be administrative staff or trusted teachers, as well as student leaders and members of the parent-teachers organizations.
- As time permits, make every effort to build authentic human relationships with members of the target community.
    - Visit local institutions (churches, recreational centers, libraries, restaurants, shopping centers), and try to get to know some of the residents.
    - Make an effort to establish bonds with pastors and leaders of various local clergy including leaders of religious and ethnic minorities. Do not just talk with the leaders of the largest church in town.
    - Depending on the culture, determine if bonds should be first established with males or females. Do your best to make yourself aware of local customs so as not to inadvertently be disrespectful of the community's practices and values. For example, In Native American cultures, it is respectful for outsiders to first make an effort to establish bonds with the local elders or tribal leaders.

- Recognize the importance of churches and other community organizations as legitimate support systems. Discuss how including them and their constituents in the decision making may be beneficial as recovery and aid efforts are devised for residents in the community. Not only will this help you to understand the needs of the community better, but if done correctly you will gain a community partner in the process.

Consider supports necessary to make planning meetings and recovery efforts inclusive.

- To ensure the hearing of diverse voices, include individuals on the planning and action teams that can truly represent or at the very least be aware of the diverse needs and interests of the target groups.

- In times of crisis and tragedy, cultural and racial affinity may become strengthened; it can play a critical role in recovery. Relief organizations are encouraged to include responders who are reflective of survivors' ethnic, racial, and social backgrounds.

- Recognize that representing ALL voices is a goal rather than a specifically attainable outcome.

Disaster Planning for People with Disabilities

The disability community has learned many lessons from September 11, 2001, Katrina and other disasters. Advanced preparation and action planning are critical issues for people with physical and other types of disabilities. Without such planning there is much greater likelihood that people with disabilities will be triaged (prioritized according to the severity of the current situation) in the event of a disaster or catastrophic event. Recent studies have found that only about one in five county emergency managers have any plans for helping residents with disabilities in the event of a disaster. Unfortunately, the news has not been much better from organizations that serve people with disabilities. Employees who were interviewed from disability service centers located in the Gulf region following Hurricane Katrina also reported having little or no plans to assist the consumers with disabilities they served in the event of a disaster. Only one of the six of these disability service centers reported that they had any plan in place and the plan was not formally written down, but more of a verbal understanding among staff members. Therefore don't assume that everyone else is an expert and that you cannot play an important role.

So how do we enhance the survivability of people with disabilities living in the community? Ideally, there would be adequate planning ranging from the pre-disaster to post-disaster event. One of the most important objectives includes determining where people with disabilities are located in the community. Some communities have developed registries for their residents with disabilities. Registration information can usually be found on county emergency operation center web sites. There continues to be a debate on the establishment of registries. Some

argue that it is an efficient way to locate those who may be more vulnerable than the general population. Other, more vocal voices in the disability community do not want their name on any type of list. Communities who have successfully used the registries that identify residents with disabilities have received sufficient amounts of funding to create and update the lists. Some of the more successful examples of community registries are located in communities that are near nuclear power reactors.

While this Manual is focused on long-term, post-disaster recovery, some of the examples of are illustrative of challenges you may face.

Directors of disability service centers located in the Gulf States affected by Hurricane Katrina reported communication barriers, making effective evacuation and post-disaster response more slow and difficult. Recommendations were made to enhance communication, including preparation and strategies for contacting their consumers and staff if technology fails. One suggestion includes the use of satellite phones since many of the cell towers were knocked down during the hurricanes. The participation of people with disabilities on-site will help reduce miscommunication during the first critical hours following a disaster. The personal assistants of people with disabilities, in some instances, were not allowed in many designated "special needs" emergency shelters following disaster events. With the absence of these personal assistants—who normally performed necessary personal care such as bowel and bladder routines—there were no other supports in the shelter to accomplish these tasks. As a result, these individuals were then sent to hospitals to have these tasks performed. These thoughtless policies and practices resulted in unnecessary hospitalizations and utilization of medical care and beds that could be better allocated to individuals with more intensive and appropriate medical needs. Better communication of policies, practices and procedures also need to be established between government agencies and disability organizations. Another set of miscommunication has occurred in recent wildfires. Emergency personnel have denied accessible para-transit vans entry to some neighborhoods to evacuate people with disabilities who did not have personal transportation.

More effective and thoughtful policies need to be created in "special needs" shelters. Even the name "special needs" is offensive to many people with disabilities. The Department of Homeland Security Target Capabilities List Work Group has worked to change the name to the more descriptive "functional support shelters." Additionally, less discriminatory policies need to be created and maintained to allow full participation in these shelters for people with various disabilities. Examples of these policies include allowance for support animals that accompany individuals with sensory or physical disabilities. The provision of necessary psychotropic medications and provision of quiet areas for individuals with psychiatric disabilities have also been denied. Even in the longest-term recovery efforts, these same sorts of biases emerge. The more you can watch out for these biases and ensure people with disabilities are paid close attention to, the better.

Conducting Outreach to Older Adults

To highlight the plight of those affected by hurricanes within the U.S., the news media often publishes numerous photos of older adults being evacuated or sheltered after the storms. These portrayals of elders as vulnerable, frail victims were later reinforced by data revealing that approximately 71% of those who died were 65 years and older. As sobering as this fact is, it is only one side of the story. It may not have garnered much media attention, but many elders were equally and actively involved in relief efforts.

Clearly, some older adults will require assistance due to frailty, health conditions, or disability, but it should not be forgotten that other elders could serve as valuable resources in helping the community recover.

This section will discuss concerns and issues in meeting the needs of elders who require additional attention and assistance during recovery, plus provide suggestions about enlisting capable older adults as volunteers. The challenge is to find a balance in responding to the special needs of vulnerable populations, as well as promoting the resiliency of others in the greater affected communities.

Issues in Providing Services to Elders

Increasingly, chronological age is not a good indicator for decisions on the need for disaster-related services. Because we age at different rates, a healthy, community-dwelling 80 year-old may have better functional abilities than a 70 year-old nursing home resident. In contrast to younger adults, older adults have been historically less likely to complain, ask for support, and receive services or resources after a disaster. Some older adults may feel that others need help more than they do and therefore will not ask for help. The ability of older adults to adjust and cope after a disaster is mitigated by their capacity to access tangible resources (i.e., water, food, medical supplies, medication) and social support.

Elders with rich social networks that include friends and family or affiliation with social services agencies, senior centers, and faith-based organizations tend to fare better during the recovery phase. Formal and informal caregivers can play an important role in assisting elders with completing required paperwork to receive aid or assistance, serving as advocates in securing treatment and services, providing or securing transportation, and promoting appropriate use of services.

When existing social networks are disrupted, helping elders establish caregiving relationships with health professionals is important. So is, when necessary, fostering new informal relationships with peers. These steps may make a critical difference in the lives of many in the long-term recovery period. Following disasters, intervention should be focused on building a recovery environment that returns people to their usual sources of social support and restores normalcy.

Older adults with limited education and financial resources may find accessing services after a disaster particularly daunting. Some older adults may be reluctant to accept assistance from government agencies. They may be more willing to receive assistance from the Salvation Army, American Red Cross, or church groups. Older adults may desire care from religious leaders, family members, informal social networks, or a personal physician. In general, older adults are more willing to accept help in familiar settings, including senior centers and religious institutions. You should be aware of potential barriers to care and this can enhance your outreach efforts and the acceptance of others to services after disasters.

Potential Barriers to Participation in Services

- mobility impairment
- visual impairment
- hearing impairment
- language or literacy
- problem recognition
- readiness to change
- stigma associated with acceptance of services
- poor health literacy
- preferences for services or type of provider
- lack of knowledge about services

Issues in Providing Mental Health Services

One role you can play is to encourage older adults to receive mental health services when they are needed. Elders may be reluctant, ashamed, or embarrassed to admit and discuss mental health problems. Consequently, some may develop serious psychiatric distress that may go unrecognized, untreated, or inadequately treated after a disaster. Some psychological symptoms may be interpreted as bodily problems, leading the older adult to seek care from a physician. Therefore, education to reduce stigma and thereby increase acceptance of treatment should be provided.

Recruiting and Using Older Adult Volunteers

Currently elders make up the largest percentage of volunteers in the U.S. However, just as it is important to understand and be aware of potential barriers to use of services, it also may be of use to consider potential barriers to serving as a volunteer. Older adults, like younger adults, may hold ageist attitudes and believe that they are too old to learn new skills or to make a significant contribution to the recovery effort.

Current volunteers might persuade hesitant elders to become active and involved by offering to "buddy" with them until they feel confident in their ability to work more independently. Flexible assignments with shorter hours or tasks that can be completed in a relatively brief

period of time might appeal to those who are uncertain about making a long-term commitment. Given that many older adults have significant knowledge and work experience, providing opportunities where they can mentor or lead others is important. Elders who volunteer potentially benefit in a number of ways: they forge new relationships, remain mentally active and engaged, do challenging and meaningful work, and have a sense of personal development and growth. Older adults possess a wealth of experience acquired over a lifetime. If asked, most are eager to help with some facet of recovery activities.

Conducting Outreach to Children in Schools

In considering outreach and work with children in schools, it is necessary to think about the assets and issues involved in using schools as a setting. What can you do for or through schools? And what are the long-term means to help the needs of children in the schools?

Addressing the Setting: Assets and Opportunities in Work with and within the Schools

Schools are a key context for targeted long-term recovery efforts because they can serve as a setting for intervention approaches and/or as a critical partner in community work. A prime rationale for providing services and supports to children and conducting outreach via the schools is that schools represent one of the core arenas in which children function. As such, they are a prime location in which to conduct screenings to assess the impact of disaster on children's social and emotional functioning.

Schools also serve as a critical source of continuity, connection, stability, and structure in communities. If it is possible to get schools functioning quickly following disaster, families and communities can look to them as significant resources that foster a sense of security and normalcy. Schools can be important providers of mental health and intervention services following disaster, in part because they are viewed as a less-stigmatizing setting than, for example, a mental health agency. Schools with pre-existing health and mental health partnerships are primed for such a role. Well after a disaster occurs, smoothly functioning schools can also increase the likelihood that residents will return to place after living in temporary housing arrangements.

Issues to Consider if Working through Schools

After disasters, it is rare for schools to have sufficient resources and person-power. It is difficult for them to respond in an ideal fashion and provide resources or supports where they are most needed. Even without a disaster, schools are often struggling with issues ranging from overcrowding to teacher burnout or distress. Consequently, following disaster, it is necessary to ensure that the needs of teachers and staff are addressed as well. Helping to promote long-term disaster recovery and stability requires that everyone consider the disaster experience of students and staff and the instrumental and psychological impact of the disaster on the school community.

Finally, given the mission and goals of schools, there may also be tension between focusing on students' academics needs versus their emotional or more basic needs. It may be important to emphasize to school personnel that there is a need to directly address potential barriers to learning (such as hunger, mental health problems, and stress) in order to support academic success, and it is also important to be aware of schools' required mandates to deal with issues regarding missing records or paperwork, accountability testing, and the like.

What are Some Things You Can Do?

Resources, both print and online, abound for school personnel, including "tip sheets" relating diverse guidelines and recommendations regarding how teachers can talk to students, how teachers/school personnel can help youngsters cope, what to "look for" in determining if a child needs to be referred for services, and other suggestions for helping children adapt following disaster. What follows are suggestions of some things you can do…

If you are a principal or school administrator or interact with them…

- Identify strategies for tapping into community and disaster relief resources.
    - In doing so, consider following the lead of Jacqueline MacDonald, principal at Mayfair Elementary, an East Baton Rouge school opened for children evacuated after Hurricane Katrina. She created a list of needed resources, based on a parent survey, as well as teacher needs and materials necessary for curriculum support. This list helped ensure that, in the face of such widespread need, the school and the families received what they really needed and were not overwhelmed. They received a glut of donations that were well-intentioned but not well-suited to the children, families, or classrooms. Ms. MacDonald also had the vision to see her school as an important clearinghouse for information and resources for her students and their families. Moreover, to facilitate communication and ongoing connection with parents, she hired a full-time parent liaison.
    - Explore mechanisms to secure funding for your school, whether to build capacity pre-disaster or to obtain needed resources, services, and supports post-disaster.
- Help others think flexibly about ways in which volunteers could meet the needs of your students and the school. Help establish screening and oversight procedures for volunteers. Encourage the appointment of a volunteer coordinator to help organize and channel spontaneous volunteers.
- Consider sponsoring parent gatherings so that parents can meet, connect, and support one another. Encourage parent involvement in school functions

and activities. Solicit parent volunteers. Parent engagement can help build support for school recovery efforts that are sensitive to family and community needs.

- Recognize that your teachers and staff will likely need extra support in working with their students, meeting their own needs and taking care of themselves. They can often use help in identifying strategies to assist their students and/or engage new students. Because many teachers have been affected personally by the disaster, school-based, supportive programming would ideally include resources for adults as well.

- Communicate regularly with school staff. Recognize their efforts and celebrate small wins and successes with them. It is important that staff members feel that they are appreciated and that people understand the extra work being put in. Brief all educators on ongoing issues and initiatives. Seek input from all staff about issues "on the ground."

- Plan for the longer-term and how to best address the multiple, ongoing needs of your students (and their families) and staff; too often, efforts are fragmented and focus solely on the immediate response to the crisis.

If you are a school mental health professional (e.g., psychologist, counselor, social worker) of if you will interact with such professionals…

- Help teachers understand the range of reactions they may see in their children. Ensure that they are aware of signs that may suggest more serious difficulties, leading them to refer students for mental health services.

- Emphasize individual differences, such as that students' post-disaster reactions will vary, that not all students will display adjustment difficulties, and that some students will experience delayed responses.

- Remember that children are often much more affected by disaster than adults know, and that their emotional reactions persist long after the initial crisis. Be a consistent voice for ongoing communication with students that normalizes the expression of emotional responses to disaster and that encourages help-seeking, problem-solving, social support and coping.

- Establish connections with teachers and support staff to provide readily available consultation about challenging behaviors and situations.

- Similarly, consider how colleagues at nearby schools may be of assistance, particularly if they were not affected (or not affected to the same degree).

They can help in supporting students and staff or assist with some of the necessary "behind the scenes" legwork, such as drafting notes to be sent home.

- Work with community partners, mental health agencies, disaster relief organizations, and others to ensure that services are available to address the diverse psychological needs of students, including those with special needs. Anticipate that pre-existing health and mental health problems of children will be exacerbated by traumatic experiences and consider early outreach or programming for these children and their families.

- In these efforts, make sure that you minimize bureaucratic "red tape." The situation is difficult enough, and it is critical to recognize the role the school can play in helping families gain access to needed services.

- Consider the degree to which a structured or semi-structured intervention would address the needs of students in your school (see note below regarding such programs). Work to ensure that interventions are strength-based and enhance students' sense of belonging. Thinking towards the longer-term, develop and/or utilize natural and informal supports in the school and community.

- While it is surely critical to strive to meet students' needs in the immediate aftermath of disaster, be sure—we advise once again—to strategize about digging in for the "long haul" and how to address student (and staff) concerns in the long-term.

If you are a teacher…

- Maintain structure and predictability in your classroom. Try to resume normal patterns and routines. Clear, consistent, fair discipline is also key. During this trying time, patience and compassion will be important virtues. You may need to modify your lesson plans and scheduled activities. Postponing exams, if possible, may also be of benefit.

- It is ok to convey that you care – show empathy for the students' experiences and be available to listen to them and reassure them.

- If new students are joining your classroom as a result of the disaster, work to ensure they feel welcomed and try to foster connectedness.

- Don't be afraid to talk about what has happened. Provide opportunities for students to express their feelings and reactions in a way that is contained and appropriate for a class setting. Listen to their questions and concerns.

- Provide age-appropriate factual information about the disaster. Consider ways in which you could incorporate aspects of the experience into the curriculum. Natural disasters, for example, provide subject matter for science lessons and a chance for students to acquire knowledge that is personally relevant to them, that helps them answer questions about their experience (e.g., What is a hurricane? What happened?). Many students benefit from creating personal narratives of their experience, and these can incorporate curricular elements such as reading, vocabulary development, spelling, writing and art.

- Identify opportunities for students to help others impacted by the disaster, including group activities for students to help their school, neighborhood, or others in the community.

If you are a parent…

- Encourage and support your child's return to school once it is safe to do so. Your child may experience anxiety about going to school or separating from you. Consider how to support your child while he or she makes this transition—options include sending notes, leaving text messages if your child is allowed to have a phone, be where and when you say you will be when picking your child up, and the like.

- Communicate with your child's teacher about issues affecting your child post-disaster. Help teachers understand your child's needs.

- Participate as actively as you can in school forums or meetings for parents and families. Learn what steps the school is taking to recover from disaster and to support students. Learn what resources might be available through the school to help students or families recover from disaster.

- If possible, offer to volunteer at school.

If you are a community partner…

- Seek to re-establish the school connection for your services or programs as soon as possible after disaster. Be flexible about programming changes you might need to make to accommodate to post-disaster circumstances.

Eliminate or minimize barriers to accessing needed services. Bring services to schools (on-site) when appropriate and possible.

- Consider opportunities for expanded services to your school partners. Your pre-existing relationship is an asset in understanding the school culture and needs, and in partnering about new needs.

- Communicate with school administrators about what they see as current needs and program priorities. Link your services to those needs whenever possible.

- As you learn about other programs or resources available for schools, students and families post-disaster, help link those to schools when appropriate.

If you are not directly affiliated with the school but want to help…

- Contact the school and offer your services. Identify the skills and resources you offer, but respect the identified needs and priorities of the school. Keep in mind that may schools will not accept unaffiliated volunteers.

- Respect the established leadership of school administrators and school protocols for enlisting volunteer help.

- Offer to pitch in with basic necessities as a way to develop rapport and trust and to serve school needs. Build supportive relationships.

- Keep your promises and commitments.

- Learn about the culture of the school, its students and families. If you are unfamiliar, ask for help or guidance.

- Think carefully about how to link your talents and resources to the school's needs, and how to fit within the umbrella of the school and its community partners. In general, be cautious about or avoid the temptation to import programs or services that are not grounded in or connected to local resources and that cannot be sustained beyond the tenure of outside volunteers.

A Caveat about Preventive Interventions and Other Programming

Any intervention through the schools must take into account the children and youth's developmental level, special needs, and cultures. Local school personnel must not uncritically

accept programs that are offered; rather, they must carefully evaluate potential programs and have input into their implementation.

Keep in mind that there can be difficulty in attempting to "import" a program in your school. Programs must be culturally competent and a good fit for your context. They can require substantial time, money, and other resources to ensure that staff members are appropriately trained and that the programs are put into action in a way consistent with the values driving their development and with the method that has documented effectiveness. Other school-based services and supports to encourage include cooperative learning/buddy programming, social skill building, stress management, and supportive programs for parents, teachers, and students. Make sure your recruitment plan includes an explanation of how volunteering can make a difference to the volunteer and the community to be served.

Summary

Challenges of working in diverse communities often stem in part from a history of neglect and maltreatment on the part of those in power. Thus, there is often mistrust on the part of some community members toward government, aid agencies, or others responding to disasters (e.g., mental health workers). These barriers are best addressed through the adoption of attitudes, behaviors, and processes embedded within culturally anchored approaches. These approaches start with taking the time to make yourself aware of the context in which you are trying to work and making an effort to be respectful while you build authentic relationships with those who you hope to partner. Identifying key leaders and encouraging diverse voices in the decision making process can go a long way in improving the outcomes for previously marginalized groups, improving the overall effectiveness of your efforts.

Part VII.

Other Helpful Community-Based Approaches

Various approaches exist to promote effective psychological and other forms of recovery. Some of these approaches wisely utilize the smallest amount of financial resources for the biggest possible effect, producing multifaceted and far-reaching effects. These include the use of mutual-help/support groups, trainer-the-trainer approaches, and social marketing, as just a few examples.

Planning and Implementing Self-Help/Mutual-Help, and Social Support Groups

What is Self-Help and Mutual Support?

There are helping communities, some of which already may exist, and some which can be created for the specific purpose of addressing mental health challenges after a disaster. Self-help groups promote mutual support among individuals who are facing common problems. These groups can provide a safe place for people to share their concerns with others, exchange emotional support and practical information, and help others while helping themselves. For people affected by disasters, self-help groups can serve as a short-term source of support soon after the crisis. They can also provide ongoing support and resource group through the months (or years) of rebuilding. Community members in these groups have an opportunity they may not otherwise have to come together for the shared purpose of rebuilding their lives and their community. Over 25 million Americans have used a self-help group during their lives. In this section, we use the terms mutual support group and self-help group interchangeably.

Typically, mutual support group members organize and manage the groups themselves. Groups are voluntary and usually range from 5-20 persons. Self-help groups usually focus on bringing about social and/or personal change through face-to-face interactions where members assume responsibility for the groups and for change. They use standard procedures, routines, and prescriptions for addressing common problems.

There are a wide variety of existing groups for many life situations and health conditions. A health professional can be an important ally in beginning a group, helping train group leaders, and obtaining resources for groups to function. However, groups led by professionals are different than mutual support.

The “key ingredients” to promoting change through self-help groups are:

- Learning that you are not all alone in the experience
- Giving and receiving help; *“through helping others, you help yourself”*

- People coming together can address concerns on their own terms

Why Self-Help?

The most powerful aspect of mutual support groups is the idea that people dealing with similar problems can empower themselves by helping other people with the same situation. Self-help encourages people to be active in addressing their concerns. Feeling isolated in coping with disasters is not unusual. *Shared common experience can be a potent antidote.*

Research shows that mutual help groups can provide efficient ways to provide help for people with a variety of social and health concerns. Furthermore, such groups can have community-strengthening abilities, as well as helping individuals. Research has documented several things that self-help groups do effectively:

- Promote a sense of community among members
- Provide an opportunity for talking about problems and getting supportive feedback
- Provide role models for making personal changes
- Teach effective coping strategies for day-to-day problems
- Provide a network of social relationships

What Makes an Effective Self-Help Group?

A unique feature of self-help groups is that you do not have to be a professional to start one. You will need motivation, energy, practical information, and interested others.

There are several key decisions to consider when starting a self-help group:

1. *Group Function*

   What is the primary purpose of the group? It could be emotional support, educational, or social action and advocacy. You need agreement on a common mission, goals, and purpose.

2. *Group Composition*

   Who will the group serve? How and when can people join? Specification of who can join and how they can join is helpful for recruitment. Some research suggests that groups are more effective when members have similar backgrounds or experiences. There is no reason to worry about how big the group is, particularly since groups like these often

involve a group of more consistent members with others rotating in and out of the group.

3. *Group Meeting Format*

   What activities will be the focus of meetings? National groups often have meeting templates and materials to assist in facilitating meetings. Sometimes they offer training. If you are creating a group independent of an established group, developing a routine that encourages participation, maintains confidentiality, and specifies how you will address your mission is essential to the group's success.

4. *Leadership*

   How will leadership tasks be distributed? There could be a formal leader for a specified period of time or tasks could be rotated. Research suggests that groups that practice shared leadership tend to do a better job of sustaining themselves and avoiding burnout.

5. *Duration*

   Will the group be time-limited or ongoing? Groups that focus on crisis situations may prefer a time-limited format. In these cases, commitment and participation may be easier if a group is not open-ended. Ongoing groups may require more energy to sustain, but they can more easily accommodate new members who would begin at different points in time.

6. *National Affiliation and Community Connections*

   What resources do you need? What costs are there associated with affiliation? Many groups choose to affiliate with national groups to have access to training and consultation while some groups prefer to be independent. Similarly, sponsorship or collaborative relations with community-based organizations (e.g., health care setting, religious organization) may provide resources (e.g., a place to meet, referrals). Other groups prefer neutrality or self-sufficiency. These decisions will depend on the group's mission and members' preferences. However, remember that support groups may experience problems when they become too isolated or insulated from community resources.

Training Models

In responding to large-scale disasters, it may be necessary to rapidly and efficiently train large numbers of people to deliver information, educate the public about common reactions to disaster, facilitate social support programs, and intervene in other ways. Extensive damage to infrastructure may make it impossible for professionally trained staff and mental health

clinicians to provide all the services needed in a community. Train-the-trainer and peer-to-peer programs aim to increase the pool of people who are qualified to provide training or services by enabling laypeople or nonprofessionals to learn and apply new skills.

Choosing a Training Approach: Train-the-Trainer or Peer-to-Peer?

A popular and effective means for disseminating information and building skills is known as the train-the-trainer model. The model is based on the principle that skilled and accomplished "master trainers" can magnify the impact of their teaching by teaching other trainers to teach yet other trainers in a cascading process of dissemination. While this is a conceptually beautiful model that promises to spread knowledge and skills to places where they are most needed, it is also a very complex undertaking that requires care to ensure beneficial results.

A peer-to-peer approach typically teaches people to deliver education, lead support groups or intervene with people similar to themselves one-on-one or in small groups. While the term "peer pressure" has somewhat negative connotations, it is one of the reasons that peer-to-peer programs are effective in influencing the behaviors of others. In contrast to professional clinicians, peer providers often have more credibility with people in the community because they have intimate knowledge of their concerns, an ability to serve as role models, and ongoing regular interaction with the affected population.

The choice between the two training models depends on several factors, including:

- Examining existing needs and abilities of the people to receive training
- Deciding on the desired level of proficiency that is preferred or required of the trainees
- Identifying resources available to conduct current and future trainings
- Choosing the scope and content of the material to be taught
- Finding an environment in which the newly trained person will perform, and
- Focusing on a population that is to be served

The steps for planning a peer-to-peer approach are similar to those for planning a train-the-trainer approach. The difference is the reduced emphasis on peers becoming trainers themselves. The two approaches also have similar limitations. Notably, delivery of services using either approach will be adversely affected by attrition of trained laypeople over time and lack of resources for continued trainings and educational programs for trainees.

Assessing Training Needs

Before initiating a train-the-trainer model, it is necessary to conduct a needs assessment. Two things are critical to assess:

- *1. What areas of knowledge and what types of skills are most likely to prove useful to the community?*

  In part this means assessing what people do not know or know how to do, and it also a means assessing their existing knowledge and skills (i.e., strengths).

- *2. What are the gaps?*

  This is about comparing the groups existing state with the desired outcomes. This is sometimes called "gap analysis." Defining the gap is a step toward formulating a curriculum for a training program that builds capacity where it is most needed.

Elements of the Train-the-trainer Model

The following is a suggested set of actions and objectives for performing and evaluating a Train-the-Trainer intervention.

- *Designating and deploying a needs assessment and planning team*

  Such a team consists of people with expertise and experience in using the skills necessary to work well with people in an affected community (e.g., key informants). These skills include readily building rapport with others and effectively conducting key informant interviews and focus groups. A focus group is a form of research where a group of individuals are asked about their attitude towards an idea. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. Other skills needed include the ability to communicate clearly, to be a good listener, and to extract and summarize key information from complex conversations.

  It is helpful to prepare a report that organizes and summarizes the findings and synthesizes a set of learning objectives. The report should also include recommendations for improving the cultural appropriateness and overall effectiveness of the training project.

  A report would also provide a suggested strategy for selecting the potential trainers. It would also include a design for structuring the subsequent phases of training to reach the largest number of people. Finally, and most critically, the report must emanate from a truly participatory model to ensure an accurate reflection of population needs and community investment in the project (i.e., "buy-in").

- *Selecting the master trainer(s)*

  The master trainer is someone who has a balance of content expertise and talent as a trainer. The term “master” in this context is similar to “master copy,” meaning one from which duplicates are then produced. There is a need for some “fidelity” of what is transmitted from trainer to trainer. Fidelity refers to the truth or consistency of the original training materials. Yet each individual trainer can develop a uniquely authentic style that is not limited to simply copying the master trainer.

  A master trainer should be a person who works well with a variety of people, including both men and women, persons of all ages, and members of all nationalities, religions, races, and ethnicities. This is a lot to expect of any person, and it is therefore necessary for master trainers to develop an awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, and to correct or compensate for biases that could undermine their effectiveness.

  It is commonly recommended that master trainers work in pairs, particularly when that would improve the complementary balance of knowledge, talents, and personal characteristics.

- *Selecting the trainers to be trained*

  The audience (the future trainers) chosen should have some talent for training others. They may also be chosen for institutional or organizational reasons such as their job or role in a community.

  Ideally, the people chosen for training will come to the training well prepared. In reality, there will be some who are less well prepared or even reluctant to participate. Nonetheless, master-trainers will treat all participants fairly and to encourage them to develop to their fullest potential.

- *Designing the training plan*

  It would be ideal if the training plan were to be developed based solely on the results of the needs assessment. In reality, a completely localized plan is almost always impractical due to limited money and time. Thus the plan is likely to begin with one or more templates and sets of recommendations from previous situations.

  The level of conceptual complexity of the training must receive careful consideration, since the characteristics of the trainee-trainers may vary considerably. While it is advisable to select trainee-trainers who have a good deal of relevant knowledge and experience, this is often impossible or inconvenient. Most experienced master-trainers will be familiar with this limitation and will adjust the conceptual level of the training accordingly. A common error, however, is to overcorrect by setting the conceptual level at the perceived lowest common denominator. In doing this, there is the danger of

underestimating the learning capacity of some participants and alienating a majority of the trainee-trainers who came prepared for a higher level of discussion and less repetition of what they have known and done already.

A well-designed curriculum will prove stimulating and gratifying to the majority of participants, and with sensitive and skillful engagement by the master trainers, even the least prepared of participants will be able to keep up with the group, contribute to the process, and gain skills from the training.

- *Designing and executing the training procedure*

  The master trainers should design the training to follow a logical sequence. Early information should prepare the participants for later material, with a gradual increase in level of complexity and integration of related knowledge and skills.

  It is important to establish a conceptual foundation that guides action. An overly practical approach that glosses over the theoretical basis for what follows may leave the participants with a set of rote skills to enact without a clear sense of how they are to be most meaningfully applied.

  It is also important to engage the participants in active learning and not to spend too much training time in lecture. This is a difficult balance to strike since the participants may lack familiarity with the most elemental components of the material, and therefore have little beyond their own experiences to build upon in the role-playing exercises.

  One approach is to provide, in advance of the training, a simple instructional manual that defines the terminology and the conceptual framework.

  Finally, remember that this is both a training focused on the subject matter and a training focused on how to perform the trainer's role. Therefore, the master trainers must gradually transfer aspects of the trainer's role to the participants so that they are able to develop the necessary experience and confidence to support their transition into the role of trainer.

- *Conducting follow-up*

  Follow-up is important for two primary reasons. First, it provides a feedback loop that can reveal flaws in the training content or process. Second, it provides information about fidelity. People trained in any given technique are most likely to perform with high fidelity to the training model for a short time and then their performance begins to drift away from the training standard. The degree of immediate fidelity is to some extent an index of how successful the training has been, while the longer-term drift away from fidelity can be influenced by a variety of individual and contextual factors.

Therefore one should build a follow-up plan into the initial training so that the trainee-trainers are more likely to understand the need for the follow-up feedback loop. It is then important to incorporate lessons learned from the follow-up feedback to improve upon subsequent iterations of the training procedure.

Social Marketing – Getting the Word Out to the Community

During a large-scale disaster or even a threat of such a disaster, many people and agencies are going to be working to get the word out to community members. It helps to know something about what other groups are doing and what you can do to help.

What Is Social Marketing and Why Is It Important?

Researchers like Dr. Alan Andreasen have defined social marketing as "*The application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs designed to influence voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society.*"

Public communication often makes use of mass media. The government agency responsible for managing the nationwide radio and television broadcast Emergency Alert System is the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The FCC provides updates to the public on what is happening and what they should do. Once the recovery phase has begun, it is often desirable to go beyond government sponsored and traditional communication media to more effectively reach out to people in your community. Initially, the community infrastructure may have sustained significant damage. At these points, it may be necessary to work with local ham radio operators (noncommercial, independent people who are able to engage in two-way radio communications) and people who own satellite telephones to communicate with emergency responders and agencies located outside the affected area.

Even with intact media and telecommunication systems, there are frequently people who may not own or watch televised broadcasts, listen to the radio, own a home telephone, or read newspapers. It is therefore important to recognize that traditional communication methods, such as public service announcements, might reach only select groups of people. In these cases, other methods will be required to conduct outreach and to disseminate information to disaster affected people.

The idea is that no single message or method of communicating is likely to be received optimally by all people. Therefore, it is oftentimes desirable to move away from a mass communications approach; one where everyone receives the same message in the same way. For this reason, social marketers categorize their targets into subgroups based on various characteristics (i.e., age, culture, sex, education) that are likely to influence their responsiveness to the communication approach or modality. The process also allows you to optimize your resources by deciding which subgroups require the greatest priority when funds and/or time are limited. Once these groups are identified, you can then determine the most effective

strategies for reaching out to them. To enhance the likelihood that your message will be received and acted on, it is desirable to identify your target audience, but also to tailor your message, and carefully select your delivery medium.

As always, it is beneficial to consult with people who represent your target audience at all stages of planning and delivery. If possible, hold small group discussions to provide feedback and guidance on writing and delivering the communications. And most important, be creative and work hard to get that message out to those who are least likely to get that information.

Crafting Your Message

People want (and are going to benefit most from) information that is easily understandable. This is true regardless of cultural background, age, or reading level. Here are a few key points to consider when developing your message:

- Determine the intended objective of your message. Do you want people to seek services at a specific time and place? Do you want them to take action by clearing debris and moving it to a specific area?

- Focus on a few key concepts.

- Keep information simple. Use plain language.

- Write your message at a 4^{th} to 6^{th} grade reading level.

- Use a simple topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph. Follow the topic sentence with examples and details. For example, "It is important to clean-up your yard after a disaster. Here are a few reasons why." Then give the reasons.

- Use a 12 pt. font or larger.

- Use pictures and photos with simple captions.

- Use bullets, numbers, and bolded font to highlight sections and key points.

Delivering Your Message

Where the message is delivered is as important as the actual message. If electronics are operating and you have access to a computer, consider posting the information on the internet. There are official web sites that are regularly updated, and they can deliver current information as it becomes available, and sometimes, even more importantly, they can help to quell rumors. You can create a Facebook page tied to the disaster. To reach those who do not own a computer or who do not have current access to internet services, it may be necessary, particularly when home and cell phone service is not available, to conduct door-to-door visits or

to distribute flyers in places where people tend to congregate. Frequently, places where other services are available are good places to begin.

As a starting point, here is a brief list of possible distribution points for written information:

Points of Dissemination

- Faith-based organizations
- Hospitals and medical offices
- Grocery stores, coffee shops, laundries, day care centers, and other places people gather
- Pharmacies
- Gas stations
- Discount stores (e.g., Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Target, Sam's Club, Costco)
- Service organizations (e.g., Kiwanis, Junior League, Masons)
- Schools and Colleges
- Nonprofit agencies

If you plan to use flyers to reach your audience, the dissemination method is just as important as the content of your message. It might be beneficial to partner with other groups involved in the response effort to broaden your access to culturally diverse populations. If people are distributing supplies (i.e., water, food, medicine, clothes), ask if the relief organization can distribute flyers along with tangible goods.

In summary, you want to make sure you know what communication methods are typically being used. You want to identify who is and who is not likely to be getting the more widely distributed information from mass marketing sources. You want to think about the content of your message, always trying to include all of the necessary information, but while keeping it as simple and readable as possible. Consider the available sources of distributing that information, and always, try to be as creative and strategic as possible. And, as always, try to use as many existing community resources as possible to get the message out to those who most need it.

Social marketing can be considered one element of a larger outreach strategy. Social marketing also shares certain goals in common with *risk communication*, which is discussed in Part X.

Part VIII.

How to Track Your Results

Why Track Your Results?

There are many reasons why you may want to track your results because all of your efforts are really about learning and thinking about what new approaches you may take. You may simply ask, What has happened? What was successful? And what was not successful?

Throughout your engagement with the community, many decisions will be made and steps taken. Few events will occur as expected. With each challenge faced, it may seem that the least of your priorities is to track and evaluate your results.

No one expects you to run advanced statistics or hire a consultant, but there are reasons to write down what has happened and when, what has worked effectively, and what steps have not worked particularly well. Tracking some of the steps toward your goals allows you to pay close attention to what you did, the barriers encountered, the time-consuming interactions that were not worth the work, and those that were, and your attempts to cope with all of these challenges. By tracking your steps, you are better able to look back at what was done more directly and objectively, helping you to plan more effectively for the future.

By engaging in "evaluation," you can get a more concrete sense of what needs to be done next, and how to explain those new strategies to others. Your notes documenting these steps may also be useful for posterity—you might just find that others in future disasters will benefit from your discoveries. Perhaps a few years from now, a town within your county will face similar flooding or a similar earthquake and you will be able to refer to your notes. Given your new found expertise, you can better guide others on what can be done.

There are also just good cognitive benefits to good note taking. You may be working on little sleep, have difficulty concentrating, and have trouble making decisions beyond the immediate crisis before you. More tangible forms of tracking can help you assess the situation later with a more refreshed and recovered state of mind. Tracking your results sets the stage for a "lessons learned" analysis.

The Evaluation and Tracking Process

The best *evaluation and tracking* process is one that fits your individual style and goals. It may require little more than the minimal jotting down of observations in a journal or collecting your thoughts throughout the day on a digital recorder. You may be more comfortable using computer software to arrange and categorize your daily events. The medium depends on you, and what will help you in your future planning.

Getting Started

Getting the information collected is the key to getting started. There are some recent trends in evaluation to make your data collection more fruitful. Thus far the Manual has suggested you get input from others, that you should develop your goals and plans, and then put those ideas to work. You will have improvised along the way, and you will be continually returning to the proverbial drawing board. You want to track those steps.

Goals and Objectives—A helpful place to start is with your goals and objectives. With goals, it is helpful to break things up into more short-term and long-term goals. Objectives are slightly different from goals in that they are more specific. You may for instance have a short-term goal to start social support groups for mothers of young children. Objectives are the specific task required to get that goal accomplished. So for instance, identifying and contacting possible group leaders would be an objective.

Objectives are what can reasonably be accomplished in a single event or interaction with others. A short-term goal would be the concrete end of a collection of those objectives—starting the support group. The broader, longer-term goals may be "to increase family support in the community." Don't worry too much about these distinctions. But at the end of this section, there is a chart that can help you track these different components. This chart may also be a good framework to help develop your action plan. In your work, when your objectives are met they can be recorded in the chart below. You may find this to be a good template for your tracking and evaluation efforts.

Activities, their Results, and Reflection—The next goal in this process is not only to consider what you wanted to do, but what you ended up doing and how it went. This is exactly why you would record your activities and the strengths and weaknesses of what happened.

Some questions to consider are: Of your objectives, when and what did you try to achieve and what resources did those acts require? How well did your recent actions and achievements meet your objectives? What were the strengths of the approach? What were the weaknesses?

The object of the tracking and evaluation exercise is never to suddenly despair over how little you were able to accomplish, but to better gauge whether your goals were realistic. The ultimate goal is to think about what you learned and how you can bring about greater congruence between your actions and objectives the next time.

Thus, the overall logic is this: If you carry out your activities toward your goals and according to the strategies in your action plan, you will meet your objectives. If you meet your objectives, you will achieve your short-term and eventually your longer-term goals.

What is important is that you see how you are progressing. Pay attention to the strengths of your approaches and the barriers you encounter. You will see the gaps that exist between what

you hoped would happen and what actually happened. That will help you vary your approach for more effective future results.

You may also want to survey or interview others about the group's efforts. The key to adequate monitoring is to ask very specific questions. You need to know enough about the situation so that you are able to accurately assess whether anything useful has happened. When inquiring about the progress of change efforts, don't just accept the "Everything's okay" response. Ask targeted questions and insist on specific and concrete as opposed to general and global responses.

Pay close attention to the effects of your efforts, and determine everyone's satisfaction with the changes that have occurred. Have them carefully scrutinize the initial strategies used and the approaches taken. Determine if the strategies taken and the targets of different efforts were the best choices. If not, on the next turn around, you may decide on other strategies or another target or that you should simply try the last strategy again. The process of any effort involves taking different steps and seeing what works, monitoring your efforts, and then trying again.

Analyzing and Putting your Data to Work

To analyze the data you simply want to process the information more deeply, to get a sense of the bigger picture, and the ways the issues naturally categorize themselves. You may want to read through the information you have collected (or listen to your recordings depending on how you collected it) a few times. You may take brief notes from your observations. You might start clumping the ideas into different sections. You may code your observations and look for patterns.

Again, ask yourself, what is working, what is not working? Are there any similar themes, gaps in the process? If so, what? Think of the positive. What has really been facilitating your group's movement? What has been setting up roadblocks, anything more consistently than another? Are you consistently falling short of some expected outcomes, but making headway on others? What are the key differences between the outcomes? Are there different strategies being implemented to accomplish your goals? How well are your strategies being implemented? If you were an outside consultant, what recommendations would you provide?

Remember, at the very least, this process is intended to stimulate you to think, to jog your memory, and allow you to step back and see the bigger picture of what has been happening along the way. In addition to the chart below, you might uncover other creative ways to graphically depict your data. You may find it useful to draw pictures and diagrams if you are spatially inclined. Try any technique that might help consolidate the information in your mind or get you to re-arrange your thoughts and put the ideas in a more logical order.

Sharing the Data

Writing up the information is a good way to begin understanding the data better. And it is usually helpful to everyone to present the findings to others. You should never forget that the lessons you learn can help other people and organizations in the future.

- Findings are often best conveyed at community meetings. Community leaders can offer useful guidance on how such meetings should be organized (e.g., who should participate and how to get the word out), and how the findings can best be communicated.

- Data from community assessments can be organized *textually* (e.g., in lists or written report format) or *visually* (e.g., through a visual map identifying locations of community resources relative to individuals with specific types of needs) or both.

- One measure of the success of a community assessment is whether community members and helpers have found the results useful enough that they are interested in hearing more.

- Think about: What remains unclear from the initial assessment effort? What else would members of the community and helpers like to know to further inform recovery efforts? Can the level and type of involvement among community members be further enhanced to improve the thoroughness and utility of ongoing data collection efforts?

Summary

In essence, we are suggesting that you pare down the formalities of the scientific process. As you collect your data, you can gather insights through creative interpretations. Take those insights and put them to use. Data are best when they are incorporated into the decision making process. Data cannot replace your own intuitive decision-making, but they can help you organize, support, and question your assumptions.

When you can, strategically fit the practice of tracking and evaluation into your day. Try to work it in on a regular schedule when it is most useful for you to record these events. If you can do this regularly, and if you can return to again reflect on and organize your notes, you might find that your ability to be effective accelerates faster over a shorter period of time. That's what this tracking and evaluation is really about. Reflecting, understanding, going back to the drawing board, recreating your plan of action, and engaging in that action out in the world is one key to a more efficient form of success, for yourself and for others in the future.

Example of Tracking Goals & Objectives

Long-term goal Increase social and family support

Short-term goal Start social support group for mothers of young children

Objective	**Activity**	**Quantity**	**Strengths**	**Challenges**	**Reflection**
Identified Needs	What was done? How was it accomplished?	When did it occur & amount of resources placed in the activity?	What worked well?	What worked less well?	Ideas for next time
Identify and contact group leader(s)					
Find location(s) that will provide free space one night a week					
Find volunteers to provide child care					
Find local market that will provide free snacks					
Advertise using flyers at neighborhood stores and services					
Hold initial exploratory meeting and subsequent meetings					

Part IX.

What Next? Using "Lessons Learned" to Prepare for the Next Disaster

When you can, strategically fit the practice of tracking and evaluation into your day. Try to work it in on a regular schedule when it is most useful for you to record these events. If you can do this regularly, and if you can return to again reflect on and organize your notes, you might find that your ability to be effective accelerates faster over a shorter period of time. That's what tracking and evaluation is really about. Reflecting, understanding, going back to the drawing board, recreating your plan of action, and engaging in that action out in the world is one key to a more efficient form of success, for yourself and for others in the future.

Let's suppose your situation is that a disaster has passed and becomes mostly a memory. The worst is now over. Your community is gradually—however long it has taken—returning to normal. You will breathe a sigh of relief, express your gratitude, and slowly edge back into your everyday activities. You have been through an extended period of disruption, stress, and strong human emotions. Everyone will need to take a break for a while – to relax, to recuperate, and to process all that has gone on. All of this is natural, and it is good.

However, you may decide that your work is not completely over. As a leader in your community, you may decide your task now is to draw upon what you've gained from this experience, so that you will be better prepared for the next disaster; just in case a similar event may come your way. It may not. Let us hope not. But it's important to be ready for it, if it does.

Chances are that many important lessons were learned from your recent experience – perhaps about the power of nature, and especially about your emergency response system, about your community, and about yourself. Your goal should be to profit from those lessons. How can you best do this?

As a first step, we believe you can best do so by meeting and doing some processing together – about what has happened, how you feel about what has happened, how your community responded, and, most essentially, how it could respond most effectively if a disaster occurs again.

These meetings can lead to greater preparedness initiatives. It may help to begin to plan. As in the long-term disaster response, and as in most group situations, planning helps.

You can demonstrate the benefits of thinking in advance by first asking and then answering: "What does our community need to accomplish now?" and "How should we accomplish it?"

In this section we'll suggest a series of planned actions you and your community can take to prepare you for future emergencies, after the immediate crisis has passed. There are 12 steps in all. They are not one-size-fits-all instructions, but rather a general framework for action – one that should be carefully reviewed, and then modified depending on your own community's

needs and resources. The suggested steps to take are outlined below, many of which will be similar to and/or complement recommendations made throughout the Manual.

Before beginning these steps, look into who is presently involved in disaster preparedness in your community. There are many places to look at in the Appendix, but on the FEMA website, (www.citizenscorps.gov) you can search on active Citizens Corps in your state or county. If there is one, consider joining forces with them. This will connect you to a nationwide effort, as well as to others in your area. If not you can find resources for starting one.

Step 1. Call a Meeting

After a brief break, when people are more rested, and more like their usual selves, it is good to hold a meeting – perhaps more than one meeting – involving the key planners and participants in the recent disaster experience. The purposes are to debrief, to assess, and to adjust.

Who should call this meeting? Probably the person with primary responsibility for disaster planning and response in your community; even if you are not that person, you may be involved as well. The tone of the meeting can be more relaxed. The sense of urgency that characterized your previous meetings may no longer be there. But as with those earlier meetings, the decision-making process will be more effective if it is planned and structured, following the same meeting guidelines laid out in Part III.

Step 2. Set the Meeting Agenda

Here are some general questions you might take up at these meetings:

- How successful were we in responding to disaster?
- What did we do that went well?
- What did we do that didn't go so well?
- How could (and should) we improve?

The rationale is simple: to the extent your community did not do as well as desired, you need to improve next time, for everyone's benefit. To the extent you did well, congratulations; but you need to sustain the quality of your work, and there may be ways you can get better. Perhaps there are ways to share your experiences with other communities, so that they might learn from you, and adapt some of what you've done to their own settings.

Step 3. Decide on the Key Elements to Review

Given the above questions, a next step is to go about answering them. A good way to proceed is to identify the key areas of your disaster response that you want to review. You can divide your analysis into separate parts, and take a look at the different components of your emergency response system, individually (This is not to neglect a broader and summarized review of the overall Disaster Response Plan itself, which should certainly be included).

Many individual components can be considered for review. These are outlined here:

- Organizational Structure
    - Inclusion of key community leaders
    - Involvement of key community leaders
    - Decision-making structure
    - Leadership
    - Staffing
    - Decision-making processes
    - Coordination among planners, and other group members
    - Communications (accuracy, speed, frequency, etc.)
    - Training
    - Use of volunteers

- Organizational Supports
    - Budgeting
    - Funding
    - Computer hardware
    - Computer software
    - Computer operations
    - Equipment
    - Supplies

- Responses of Different Community Sectors
    - Government
    - Police
    - Fire services/other emergency services
    - Health care providers/health care system
    - Emergency vehicles/emergency transportation
    - Other pre-assigned emergency providers
    - Media
    - Schools/school system
    - Counselors/mental health workers
    - NGOs/Relief Agencies
    - Local Social Service providers
    - Community-based organizations/block clubs
    - Local businesses
    - Public transportation agencies

- Provision of Basic Needs
    - Adequate food and water
    - Adequate shelter
    - Adequate health care

  - Provision for children
  - Transportation

- Resident Outreach and Engagement
  - Notification and publicity to residents
  - Resident involvement
  - Resident response
  - Resident cooperation
  - Utilization of community assets

- Outreach to Designated Populations
  - Youth
  - Elderly
  - Homeless
  - Different ethnic and language constituencies
  - People with disabilities

Your review need not be limited to the areas above; nor do you have to review each one individually. You should decide on the basis of the key areas most relevant for your community, and on the people available to do the job. In many situations, focus on five or six broad areas, and classify them in the way that makes most sense for you and your group.

Step 4. Determine Review Procedures

Once review areas are agreed upon, determine the procedures to be used study each one so that your reviews will be objective, fair, and useful.

Two key questions arise here:

- What indicators will you use to evaluate success and how will they be selected?
- What methods will you use to collect data on the indicators chosen?

Possible indicators include participation rates, response times, information requests, and counseling sessions.

As for methods, you might use public records or observations, or interview or survey people directly involved in disaster recovery. Alternatively, you could hold well-publicized “town hall” meetings open to all community members. Or you might decide to use different methods in combination. The general idea in all situations is to conduct your review thoughtfully, fairly, and systematically.

Step 5. Assign Review Responsibilities

For each designated area, assign one or more people to take lead responsibility in collecting the needed information. That person or small group can be charged with three basic tasks: reviewing, reporting, and recommending.

A choice point: should each group include people leading the initiative in the long-term post-recovery effort? On the one hand that earlier leader will be knowledgeable, but may also not be entirely objective, for a variety of reasons. Alternatively, it's possible to utilize people who were not directly involved in a given response area. That would minimize natural bias, but it might also lower review expertise. There's a natural tradeoff here.

Step 6. Set Timelines

Agree on a time frame and deadline for collecting and reporting on the information desired, so that the reviews of each individual component are completed at roughly the same time.

Step 7. Create a Draft Report

When data collection for each agreed-upon area has been completed, draft a report with findings and recommendations for each. That is, each person or group reviewing a given area should write up its suggestions, conclusions, and recommendations. Then the combined results should be blended into an overall report, again with findings and recommendations, both in general and by each specific area.

Step 8. Publicize the Report

The draft report should then be made public. It should be presented in a series of meetings, first to the original planners and leaders, then to other key community representatives, as well as to the community at large.

The report draft should also be well distributed, through local media, to the general community. Copies should be posted to the community's primary web site. Print copies should be available in the library and town (or city) hall. Everyone in the community should be encouraged to review the report draft, and to provide comments and suggestions. Those comments and suggestions should be recorded and summarized. They will provide the basis for revisions.

Step 9. Revise the Disaster Response Plan

When comments and suggestions have been collected and summarized, many of them should be converted into use – and, more precisely, incorporated into a revised disaster response plan. Several members of your disaster-planning group should be charged with making these revisions, and presenting the revised plan back to the full group for final approval. That

approval will be a major step forward for your community, particularly if your community did not have a prior preparedness plan. If it did, this plan is worth studying and understanding. It is important to learn what existing work has been done and to coordinate within that plan. In either case, you will now have a better plan than you had before. And at this point, there are three more steps to consider:

Step 10. Share the Revised Plan with the Community

Upon approval, the revised disaster plan should be publicized to the community, in much the same way as earlier plans (Step #8), but this time even more extensively, for this is your community's plan. It could save lives. Everyone willing to pay attention should know about it.

Specifically:

- The key leaders in the community should have a printed copy of the plan, perhaps in loose-leaf form, so that future revisions can be easily inserted. Leaders should be instructed to keep the plan readily available.

- New and emerging leaders should receive hard copies of the plan as well. In any community, there will be a frequent turnover of people in key positions. New leaders now filling these positions will need to know about the plan and be brought up to speed. New leaders would also benefit from receiving orientation and training regarding the plan when they assume more official responsibilities.

- Community members in general should have easy access to the plan. To facilitate such access:

    - Print copies should be available to the public in the library and in major appropriate town or city offices.
    - A full copy should be posted on the community's local web site (Step #8)
    - Notices of the plan's availability should be made in the local newspapers and other local media.
    - The local newspaper itself should print a plan summary.
    - Ideally, each resident, despite the importance of paper conservation, should receive a printed summary as well.

Step 11. Continue to Refine the Plan

Once the revised plan has been created and distributed, there is still some work to do. Just as valuable equipment needs regular inspection and maintenance, and just as provision of services gains from continuous evaluation and modification, a plan too requires ongoing testing and revision. For a disaster plan, periodic testing and updates are all the more important, because of its life-saving importance.

Testing in this case means that the community needs to conduct realistic drills on an annual or other regular basis, using different disaster scenarios, to make sure procedures are working properly. Results should be evaluated, objectively and fairly as before.

Additional revisions might also come about through staffing changes (e.g., additions, cuts, or reorganizations), changes in statewide or federal policy, new computer capability, or in multiple other ways. Based upon those changes, and upon test results, ongoing adjustments in your emergency procedures and in your written plan should then be made as necessary.

Step 12. Share and Exchange Ideas with Others

A final step in this 12-part outline is to share and exchange your ideas with others. In fact, this should occur not only at the end, but rather continually, for as long as a disaster might occur.

If your plan has evolved through careful deliberation and hard-won experience, you may have learned lessons other communities ought to know; they will benefit from your work. But if your efforts are still in the beginning stages, or developing stages, you should be motivated to seek out ideas and assistance from others who have been working at it longer than you have. Their knowledge, and their support, can save you time, money, and energy, all precious commodities.

What's more, communities will normally be glad to help and support each other. Community ideas are not patented; and everyone benefits from giving ideas away. When all communities have a sound plan in place, everybody wins.

To facilitate the exchange process, here are some specific actions you can take:

- Share your plan with other communities in your region.
- Attend regional meetings and conferences, where you and nearby communities can update and assist each other (or initiate a meeting or conference yourself).
- Devote some time to reading the current professional and popular literature in your field.
- Visit the most influential web sites in emergency planning and recovery – again some of them are listed in the Appendix of this Manual – to learn more about activities, plans, and opportunities, on both state and national levels.
- Check the links on those web sites to learn about other distinctive plans; and perhaps link your own site to theirs.

Summary: Community Disaster Response Plans

Every community should have a disaster response plan. That plan should be comprehensive, accurate, up-to-date, responsive to local conditions, tested, approved, easily available, widely distributed, and applicable to a wide variety of emergencies.

More specifically, in such a plan:

1. Everyone in the community should know when a disaster or emergency has occurred.

2. Everyone in the community should know where to obtain – and be able to obtain – timely and accurate local emergency information, with back-up sources in place in case the primary system fails.

3. Local government should have tested procedures to communicate timely and accurate local emergency information to everyone.

4. Everyone in the community should know what local facilities they could or should go to, if forced to evacuate their home.

5. Everyone in the community should have copies of – or at least quick access to – a summary of the community's emergency plan.

6. The community should also have auxiliary, resident-led, decentralized, non-governmental structures in place to contact, and if needed to assist, every one of its residents.

In disaster planning and recovery, much valuable information is available for individual preparedness and response – what you and your family should do at home. This must be supplemented by community-wide planning and action so that the community as a whole acts in parallel with what people can do for themselves.

Part X.

Enhancing Disaster Readiness through Public Education

What is Disaster Readiness?

Disaster readiness refers to the various actions people should take before, during, and after a disaster. Everything depends on the type of the disaster that might be most likely, but these actions are likely to include:

- *Planning*, e.g., having a household disaster plan
- *Training* and practice, e.g., learning first aid
- *Organizing* supplies and equipment, e.g., stockpiling enough of what you'll need
- *Securing* building contents, e.g., attaching heavy furniture to the walls
- *Protecting* building structure, e.g., evaluating the safety of your home
- *Safeguarding* finances, e.g., buying insurance, having cash on hand

A comprehensive approach to household disaster readiness considers all of these aspects. And many more resources and ideas are available to help in the Appendix. You can also help increase the readiness of your community by assisting your neighbors into learning about and accomplishing any of these tasks.

Essentials of Public Education

The fundamental challenge of public educations is that people are often reluctant to believe that disasters will happen – and if they do, they are more likely to happen to other people. Let's say you have decided to encourage your community to be more prepared. You are currently engaged in a public education campaign. What might you be required to consider? Perhaps (1) the characteristics of the information others should get, (2) the audience who is to receive it, and (3) the mix of information and audience. Let's take a closer look:

- ***Information factors*** – These describe the message itself. How and what do you want people to learn?

    - *Repetition* - The more the message is heard, the greater the number of different sources (who gives the information), and the greater the number of channels (how/where people receive the information), the better. With repetition, each exposure confirms and reinforces the message, and each time they hear a message that is not getting through may make them more likely to act.

    - *Guidance* - If you want people to "get ready," tell them *what to do* to get ready and tell them *why they should do it*. Help people see the potential losses and

consequences of inaction, and emphasize how action can cut these losses. Sometimes people do not need vague probabilities and potentialities but rather that they need to take action now.

- *Consistency* – Consistent with our call for repetition, public education often works best if messages from different organizations say the same thing. Therefore messages are usually more effective if different organizations have worked together to create them.

- *Cues* - Combining verbal and visual messages can increase the effectiveness of information. People respond both to physical cues (seeing things) and to social cues (seeing people do things). Social cues are fundamental to human behavior.

- ***Audience factors*** – The audience is a filter through which information must pass, and that filter can have a big impact on how that information is received.

  - *Status* - Characteristics such as socioeconomic status influence access to different sources of information and the credibility of different sources. People of different cultures have different norms and attitudes about preparedness that should be explored.

  - *Roles* - Roles, particularly those that involve responsibility for other people, e.g., partners, family, and children, also influence receptivity to messages, including those about the need to reduce future risks and to become better prepared.

  - *Experience* - People use their own experiences to determine what they are likely to experience. Think about ways to use people's experiences to help them think about what is most likely to be effective in planning for future events.

- ***Process factors*** – Process factors refer to the ways in which the message and audience mix.

  - *Beliefs/trust* - No one source of information is credible for everyone. This is another reason to use multiple sources. Trusting in a single source to convey a message may leave many unconvinced. Again, it is best to hear the message over and over from multiple sources.

  - *Perceptions* – Simply because people perceive risks does not mean they will engage in precautionary behaviors. People also need a sense that the recommended actions are likely to be effective. The recommended actions must make sense, on a number of levels.

  - *Milling* - Few people do something simply because others tell them to do it. Most like to feel as if they have had some say in the process. This can come from

talking it over with others, a process sometimes called “milling.” Like the process of milling wheat into flour, discussions are an important step to turn ideas into readiness for action. For example, in Missouri, the National Alliance of the Mentally Ill promoted disaster readiness by visiting support groups and working with them to make disaster readiness kits. They also developed a sense of mutual accountability by encouraging members to develop a buddy system. Not all groups have resources for small gifts, but they additionally gave each member of the support group a flashlight and batteries to start his/her kit.

In essence, to encourage preparedness related actions in others you want them to learn what actions to take, to see others get ready, and have them talking with others about getting ready.

Seven Steps for Designing a Public Education Campaign

Experts on public education in this area recommend following the following seven steps to prepare messages for the public.

1. *Take People and Context into Account When Designing the Message*

   When relevant, create materials using age-appropriate material, deliver messages in multiple languages, use types of media that are utilized by diverse audience segments, partner with locals to get the message out, reference past disasters and use anniversaries, as these are times when interest is high. You may also bring up disasters that have occurred elsewhere. Explore strategic places for printed material, for example, an agreement could be worked out with companies to get messages placed on grocery bags or in coloring books.

2. *Create understandable and believable messages.*

   Use clear material, and avoid technical terms. Collaborate with locals (who know general local beliefs and attitudes) to help develop messages. Partner with others for consistency across messages. Media packets increase consistency. Use attractive formats, simple language, and visual aids and graphics.

3. *Produce a “stream” of communication over time.*

   As always, effective risk communication is an ongoing process, not a single act. Communicating the same message many times and over diverse dissemination channels is best. If your recommendations have changed from past messages, be sure to explain the rationale behind those changes.

4. *Shape risk perceptions for action.*

   Explain who's at risk, who isn't, and why. Identify potential losses and show how they can be prevented or reduced. It is okay to acknowledge uncertainty about the "when, what, and where" of events, but you must convey certainty with regard to how to get ready. Tell people that, "Experts agree we need to get ready now. Lives can depend on it."

5. *Engage in "Milling" and make information as available as possible.*

   We mentioned "milling" earlier, the process of discussion and getting buy-in. You should also get out information in accessible places, and then tell people where they can get it. Take advantage of community events. Provide contact information—point persons, web sites, mail and email addresses. Encourage people to talk about getting ready with others.

6. *Encourage and support action.*

   Use your sources of information to describe to people what to do before, during, and after a disaster. Use interactive and experiential approaches, such as drills and exercises. Tell people where and how to get resources, technical support, and professional services. Use public and private partnerships to prepare and disseminate written materials, such as brochures.

7. *Evaluate and monitor effectiveness.*

   If you have the opportunity to survey the community, do it. Getting a "baseline" measure of household readiness actions can be helpful. Surveys can provide measures of changes in behaviors over time and can also help you to learn whether residents recognize your campaign. Possibly you can learn which campaign components are and aren't working, and you can change your campaign based on those findings.

Much of the information in this section was drawn from the work of Dr. Dennis Mileti, the former director of the Natural Hazards Research and Information Center at the University of Colorado. A comprehensive bibliography created by this group on preparedness research can be found in the appendix.

Closing Comments

When both individual and community actions are well-intentioned, well-chosen, and coordinated, your community's response to disaster will be most effective. You can best accomplish this through thorough planning and testing. Your community can have an exemplary disaster response and recovery. Always remember though that multiple contexts demand flexibility, keep your options open, and don't get yourself stalled by thinking there is only one path to success. There are many.

We hope this Manual has given you some ideas and skills for how to make positive forms of change happen in these very difficult situations. We wish you and your community every small and big win in bringing your community back to its fullest strengths in the near future and many years to come.

Part XI.

Appendix

GENERAL

References and Resources

Below we provide a wide variety of resources including many websites and their links. Many of them, if not all, are U.S.-based. Therefore while all information is not culturally, geographically, etc. equally relevant to every nation, they all contain some very useful pieces of information for anyone. We provide general disaster resources and organizations and then provide external resources tied to the different sections of the Manual. Here, first, is a general description of some of the different types of resources and example names of groups and organizations associated with such categories:

- ***Pre-existing Government web sites:*** Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA); U.S. Census; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Service and possibly special links for disaster; National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences; National Academy of Science (including National Academy of Medicine); and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development).

- ***Special Government and Quasi-Governmental Agency Web Sites:*** set up specifically for the disaster (for example, the American Red Cross; NeighborWorks America, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac if there is housing loss involved). Local or state emergency management sites should have much information that is useful.

- ***Professional Association Web Sites:*** such as those mentioned above including the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association

- ***Local State and County, Agricultural, and Cooperative Extension Services***

- ***State and City Departments of Health, Emergency Preparedness***; Housing agencies including emergency housing assistance units

- ***Web Sites***: for Colleges and Universities assisting with emergencies

- ***Voluntary and Advocacy List Servers:*** developed by various kinds of voluntary and advocacy organizations

- ***Email List Servers:*** developed to link disaster survivors with services

Other Relevant U.S.-Based Stakeholders

There are many larger and oftentimes external organizations that are likely to play important roles in disaster recovery in the United States. We will describe a few of these here. We will describe those active on a national level, but there may be many other organizations working in your community. Many of these organizations have a good deal of information about disaster recovery on their web sites. Local members of these organizations may be good people to involve in your efforts. These groups are listed alphabetically.

American Psychiatric Association	The world's largest psychiatric association. Members are physicians (MDs and DOs) who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. *Disaster Psychiatry* is a growing area of interest, and members of this association and other psychiatrists will often be on the scene after disasters. www.psych.org
American Psychological Association	The world's largest association of psychologists. In 1991, APA established the *Disaster Response Network* to work collaboratively with the American Red Cross and other relief organizations to provide licensed psychologists on-site to aid disaster survivors and relief workers. www.apa.org
American Red Cross	An independent, tax-exempt charitable organization granted a charter by the U.S. Congress in 1905 to carry on a system of national and international relief efforts to mitigate suffering caused by fires, disasters, and other calamities. The Disaster Services Division provides shelter, food, and health and mental health services. The ARC's presence is greatest in the immediate aftermath of disasters. However, they sometimes sponsor longer-term benefits that fund mental health treatment. The American Red Cross is an excellent source of information for disaster preparedness. www.redcross.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	A branch of the federal Public Health Service that responds to disasters when requested to do so by the State's Health Department. In these circumstances, the CDC commonly assists policy-makers in assessing public health problems and needs through epidemiology and surveillance. CDC also plays an important role in disasters through its 50 centers for public health preparedness spread throughout the United States. http://emergency.cdc.gov
Center for Mental Health Services	A center housed within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The Emergency Services and Disaster Relief Branch works in collaboration with FEMA to administer the Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program. The Center also works actively with health and mental health departments around the country to promote greater disaster behavioral health preparedness. They fund and oversee the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and SAMHSA's Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC, described below). This is a good place to go for web-based resources. http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/EmergencyServices
Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress	Located within the Department of Psychiatry at the Uniformed Services University (USU), CSTS bridges military and disaster psychiatry. Its website hosts a wealth of information about disaster preparedness, pandemic flu, body recovery, psychological first aid, and many other topics. www.centerforthestudyoftraumaticstress.org
Citizens Corps	A program created to provide opportunities for people to participate in a range of activities to make their families, homes, and communities safer from disasters of all kinds. The program emphasizes personal responsibility, training, and volunteer service. Citizen Corps is coordinated nationally by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency. In this capacity, FEMA works closely with other federal entities, state and local governments, first

responders and emergency managers, and the volunteer community. The Citizen Corps mission is accomplished through a national network of state, local, and tribal Citizen Corps Councils. Citizen Corps has five federally sponsored partner programs, including CERT and MRC (described separately). www.citizencorps.gov

Citizen Emergency Response Teams (CERT)

A program that educates people about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. www.citizencorps.gov/cert

Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP)

A federally funded program that operates through grants made to disaster-declared states. States may apply for Immediate Services Program grants (lasting two months) or Regular Services Program grants (lasting nine months). The grants can often last for much longer through extensions. These programs aim to meet the short-term mental health needs of communities through outreach, public education, and individual and group counseling. If you are in a disaster-declared area, CCP is likely operating in your community, often under names such as *Project Recovery* or *Project Hope*; although sometimes their names have a more local flavor, such as *Project Heartland*, *Project Liberty*, or *Louisiana Spirit*. This program should be a good source of information about local resources, and it may be able to work with you in other ways. SAMHSA's Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC, described below) handles applications and materials for the program.

Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC)

A resource and technical assistance center for states and territories preparing for or responding to disasters. DTAC maintains an extensive set of resource materials helpful when preparing for or responding to disasters and pandemic flu. Materials on their web site can be

	downloaded, and they publish a free newsletter called the *Dialogue*, that emphasizes practical information and on-the-ground experiences. http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/dtac
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	Housed within the Department of Homeland Security, FEMA's mission is to reduce loss of life and property and protect the nation's infrastructure from hazards through a comprehensive program of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. FEMA operates individual assistance and loan programs and funds the Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program. There is a wealth of information about disasters on its website. www.fema.gov The Department of Homeland Security also has many resources for disaster preparedness on http://www.ready.gov. FEMA has also published a facilitators' guide, "Are You Ready?" that provides a step-by-step approach to disaster preparedness by walking the reader through the steps to become aware of local emergency plans, the ways to identify the most serious hazards in a local area, and how to develop and maintain an emergency communications plan with appropriate disaster supply kits. Other topics covered include evacuation, emergency public shelters, and information specific to people with disabilities. FEMA offers many useful Independent study courses online as well. More information may be found at www.disasterhelp.gov.
Medical Reserve Corps	A program that coordinates the skills of physicians, nurses and other health professionals who volunteer to address their community's ongoing public health needs and to help their community during large-scale emergencies. www.medicalreservecorps.gov/HomePage
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)	A membership organization that promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. The NASW has become increasingly active in

	disaster response, usually working in conjunction with the American Red Cross. http://www.socialworkers.org/
National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (NCPTSD)	A seven-site consortium created by public law and housed within the Department of Veterans Affairs. As a leading authority on PTSD, NCPTSD collaborates with many other federal agencies and is active in disaster work via an interagency agreement with SAMHSA. Together with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, it produced a manual for *Psychological First Aid*, which is available on its web site. It is a rich source of information about trauma for both mental health clinicians and the general public. www.ncptsd.va.gov
National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)	Funded by SAMHSA, the mission of NCTSN is to raise the standard of and access to care of children and their families. The University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and Duke University are the lead institutions, but the network includes many universities, hospitals, and community-based organizations across the country. NCTSN is also active in disaster response and has many resources on its web site. Together with the National Center for PTSD, it produced a manual for *Psychological First Aid*, which is available on its web site. http://www.nctsnet.org
National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA)	A private, non-profit organization of victim and witness assistance programs that, among other activities, sponsors National Crisis Response Teams composed of volunteer mental health specialists, victim advocates, public safety professionals, and members of the clergy, among others. CRTs aim to help local leaders identify groups at risk of experiencing trauma, train local caregivers, and provide group crisis intervention services. www.trynova.org/crt
National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD)	A national organization that coordinates planning efforts of voluntary organizations within disaster responses. Member organizations meet regularly when disasters occur. NVOAD encourages members to convene on-site

	to facilitate cooperation among volunteers and existing organizations. www.nvoad.org
Salvation Army	One of the most well-known, faith-based international organizations that is also active in disaster response. Funded by donations, the Salvation Army focuses on supporting first responders and providing large-scale forms of care following disasters. www.salvationarmyusa.org

Other Useful General Disaster Sites and Resources

Other Useful Sections of FEMA site: This site describes a 2009 federal National Disaster Recovery Framework Initiative, which created a working group whose goal was "to engage recovery stakeholders to create a comprehensive coordinating structure that will enhance our ability to work together and effectively deliver recovery assistance." http://www.fema.gov/recoveryframework

The detailed draft report of the National Disaster Recovery Framework Initiative (see citation above), released in February, 2010, with many specific recommendations on different aspects of recovery. http://www.fema.gov/pdf/recoveryframework/omb_ndrf.pdf

"Long-Term Community Recovery Planning Process: A Self-Help Guide." Published in December, 2005 by the Louisiana Recovery Authority in conjunction with FEMA, and based in part on Louisiana's post-Katrina experiences, this is a long (~100 pages) and attractively-designed step-by-step manual, together with worksheets and about a dozen case studies, all generally applicable to other post-disaster situations. A hard-copy version contains a CD and other supplements. http://www.fema.gov/pdf/rebuild/ltrc/selfhelp.pdf or http://www.emd.wa.gov/plans/documents/selfhelp.pdf. (Also available as a CD on demand from the FEMA library, at http://www.fema.gov/library.)

An inter-agency resource focusing on long-term community recovery efforts, and specifically designed to provide coordinating and planning information about "the long-term community recovery planning process and the federal interagency Emergency Support Function #14 (ESF #14) created to facilitate this process." http://www.fema.gov/rebuild/ltcr

Provides detailed information for citizens on what steps to take after different kinds of disasters. http://www.fema.gov/rebuild

This site is particularly good in providing information on recovering from personal and family trauma. http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/recovering_from_disaster.shtm

Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado: Sociologists and psychologists have been studying how people understand risk and warnings about risk for a long time, and they have

offered sound advice about the steps to take to convey information to the public. Researchers at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado have prepared a comprehensive bibliography for readers who would like a detailed review of this research. The bibliography can be found on-line at http://www.colorado.edu/hazards/publications/informer/infrmr2/pubhazbibann.pdf.

Discovery Recovery Working Group: A site describing the work of the Disaster Recovery Working Group, an ongoing group of high-level federal administrators, mandated to "provide operational guidance for recovery organizations as well as make suggestions for future improvement." The group has also created mechanisms on the site to solicit general stakeholder involvement and input to inform the Group's activities and recommendations. http://www.disasterrecoveryworkinggroup/gov

Institute for Community-Based Research: The Institute for Community-Based Research, located at Delta State University in Mississippi. Also contains multiple resources. According to its web page on disaster relief, "this website is intended to serve as a resource for people conducting, applying, and disseminating community-based research to understand disasters and inform redevelopment." http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/jgreen/New_ICBR_WebPages/Disaster%20Relief%20and%20Recovery.htm

Operation Fresh Start: A web page of Operation Fresh Start, focusing on "using sustainable technologies to recover from disasters." This link also lists about 20 links to other organizations and sites, and links as well to 5 case studies though these focus more on sustainable development and on bricks-and-mortar than psychological processes. http://www.freshstart.ncat.org/other.htm

COAD: This is the Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) Guidance Manual, published by the state of Missouri. A COAD is essentially a coalition of local service providers. In addition to covering some basic points on disaster recovery, this 29-page manual seems especially useful for the many checklists in its appendices. http://sema.dps.mo.gov/COAD.pdf

Lessons Learned Information Sharing: Lessons Learned Information Sharing, describing itself as the national network of best practices for emergency response providers and homeland security officials. This site appears to be especially comprehensive; listings are also peer-reviewed by professionals. It is an encrypted system, which requires being a registered user. http://www.llis.dhs.gov/index.do

The Natural Hazards Center: Based in Boulder, Colorado, the Natural Hazards Center is a multi-faceted site with web resources, annotated bibliographies, and training opportunities, plus grant listings and a grants list-serve on multiple disaster-related topics. http://www.colorado.edu/hazards/resources/web/

Corporation for National and Community Service: This is the site for the federal government's Corporation for National and Community Service, and specifically that part of the site dealing with disasters, listed as one of its five priority areas.
http://nationalserviceresources.org/service-activities/disaster-preparedness-and-response

This disaster section includes (1) a disaster discussion e-mail forum, available by subscription join-disasterdiscussions@lists.etr.org, and with a searchable archive, which may be useful as a place for receiving and sharing information; (2) a *Weekly Disaster News Update*; and (3) other disaster-related resources listed on the Corporation's Resource Center, http://nationalserviceresources.org.

Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) program at VHA facilities - DEMPS is designed to provide a system whereby active or retired VHA personnel can register, in advance, for deployment in support of internal emergencies affecting the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), or external support as might be requested under various Federal plans and authorities such as the National Response Framework (NRF). The DEMPS Program and its database will be used by VHA Central Office, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Directors, and medical facility Directors as a resource to match personnel qualifications to emergency response requirements and needs. The Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) is assigned program responsibility for DEMPS. Program oversight and coordination are accomplished through the VHA Emergency Management Coordination Group (EMCG).

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors - the Multi-State Disaster Behavioral Health Consortium is an affiliate of NASMHPD. A Multi-State Disaster Behavioral Health Consortium has been formed over the last year by states and now has 23 members from across the country. The Mission of the Consortium is to ensure that State authorities are represented in disaster and emergency response planning and preparedness activities at the national level as key partners in all Federal public health and medical preparedness activities. See their website for more details - http://www.sdbhc.us.com/

PART II COMMUNITIES, THE EFFECTS OF DISASTERS, AND RESILIENCE

Much of the information in this section was taken from two sources:

Hobfoll, S., Watson, P., Bell, C., Bryant, R., Brymer, M., Friedman, M.J., et al. (2007). Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence. *Psychiatry* (70), 283-315.

Norris, F., Stevens, S., Pfefferbaum, B., Wyche, K., & Pfefferbaum, R. (2008). Community resilience as a metaphor, theory, set of capacities, and strategy for disaster readiness. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 41,* 127-150.

The example was taken from:

Abramowitz, S. (2005). The poor have become rich, and the rich have become poor: Collective trauma in the Guinean Languette. *Social Science and Medicine, 61*, 2106-2118.

PART III: WORKING TOGETHER WITH OTHERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Get Together with Other Survivors: This short but very specific document includes several links of its own; many of the sources also have their own links. There are additional materials on their general site as well.)
http://www.disastersurvivornetwork.com/1_tips/tips_community_recovery.htm

Community Weaving: This Seattle-based program trains volunteers to be "community weavers" and to work with (among other things) disaster survivors to find transitional housing and other sources of support. http://communityweaving.org
A longer paper describing the program can be found at http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers2007/honey2.htm.

CARe: An organization for "survivors helping survivors." On its web site, CARe (spelled as noted) provides more than two dozen downloadable handouts, largely on issues of insurance claims, working with adjusters, and tax information. In addition, CARe also offers phone consultation and face-to-face meetings. http://www.carehelp.org

Coalition Formation – How to Create a Coalition on Disaster: Recovery before a Disaster: A fact sheet: Despite the word "before" in the title, the material here seems potentially very useful after a disaster as well. http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/disaster/factsheets/html/6.html

Learning for Sustainability: For those "wanting to improve social learning and collective action initiatives to support sustainable development and foster community resilience." Has a separate section on disaster management, with a link to a study called "Oklahoma City – Seven Years Later – Lessons for Other Communities." Searching the term "disaster management" yields several pages of additional results. http://learningforsustainability.net

Disaster Council: A site targeted to Marin County, California, with particular discussion of disaster councils and neighborhood organization, as well as links to personal and family planning materials.
http://www.nicasio.net/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=30&Itemid=48&

The Community Toolbox: A global resource for free information on essential skills for building healthy communities. It offers more than 7,000 pages of practical guidance in creating change and improvement (available on-line in English or Spanish) http://ctb.ku.edu

PART IV. ASSESSING COMMUNITY NEEDS AND ASSETS

Community Risk Assessment (CRA) Toolkit uses participatory action research methods to place communities in the lead role for the assessment, active planning, design, implementation and evaluation of activities aimed at reducing the community's risk to disaster. Whether they are rural, urban or semi-urban neighborhoods, it is crucial that communities exposed to hazards can contribute to the risk assessment and planning process. CRA focuses on identifying the most vulnerable groups in a community, and explores what local capacities can be used to enhance the resilience of the community members. The CRA Toolkit is part of the wider ProVention-supported 'Community Risk Assessment and Action Planning' project. Intended users of the Toolkit are international NGOs and their partner organizations, local government staff, risk researchers and community based organizations, active in developmental and/or humanitarian work. http://www.proventionconsortium.org/?pageid=39

- Some universities across the country have made information on community assessment and development available to the public. Two are especially noteworthy:

    - For general resources on community assessment, it's hard to beat the community toolbox provided by the Workgroup on Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. The Community Tool Box is the world's largest resource for free information on essential skills for building healthy communities. It offers over 7,000 pages of practical guidance in creating change and improvement. http://ctb.ku.edu

    - The web site for the Asset-Based Community Development Institute also has useful information. The ABCD Institute aims to identify, nurture, and mobilize neighborhood assets. There are a number of guidance documents that can be downloaded from their web site. http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/abcd/ Asset mapping can be used by anyone to get the layout of the land, to know specific services in the area, and to identify the strengths of the community. For instance, if you identify a particularly large gap in assistance to youth, you may want to create an asset map of all the youth programs in the area who might be prepared to readjust to the disaster and focus on supporting certain area children with the programming they did prior to the disaster. Their staff and resources may be particularly low at this point, but on the other hand, some may be around and ready to help or ready with other creative alternatives.

PART V MAKING AN ACTION PLAN

See Community Toolbox: http://ctb.ku.edu

PART VI. TYPES OF COMMUNITIES AND OUTREACH TO DIVERSE GROUPS

Cultural Competence

Haiti and Cultural Competence: It is a necessity to become aware, knowledgeable and sensitive to the various cultures that you are attempting to help. This source has everything from cultural beliefs to doing disaster work and the aftermath of how to work with children/families in the U.S. Haitian Communities. http://education.miami.edu/crecer/resources_Haiti.htmlhttp://education.miami.edu/crecer/resources_Haiti.htmlhttp://education.miami.edu/crecer/resources_Haiti.html <http://education.miami.edu/crecer/resources_Haiti.htmlhttp://education.miami.edu/crecer/resources_Haiti.htmlhttp://education.miami.edu/crecer/resources_Haiti.html

Center for Global Initiatives: This resource has a list of "Haiti Do's and Don't's http://centerforglobalinitiatives.org/cgiblog_detail.cfm?uuid=38A4C93D-AAAA-A3B3-3FDBA4E3B508FFB5

Outreach

Child Trauma Academy: www.childtrauma.org as well as http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/katrina.asp

Donnelly, W.O., Miller, A.C. Young, L., Jones, G., Reeve, C.C., & La Greca, A.M. (2006). Recreating home after disaster: Challenges for Katrina's kids. *The Child, Youth, and Family Services Advocate, 29 (3),* 1-4.

Jaycox, L.H., Morse, L.K., Tanielian, T., Stein, B.D. (2006). *How schools can help students recover from traumatic experiences: A tool kit for supporting long-term recovery.* Rand Corporation. Retrieved from: http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/2006/RAND_TR413.pdf.

Kilmer, R.P., Gil-Rivas, V., & MacDonald, J. (2010). Implications of major disaster for educators and school-based mental health professionals: Needs, actions, and the example of Mayfair Elementary. In R.P. Kilmer, V. Gil-Rivas, R.G. Tedeschi, and L.G. Calhoun (Eds.). *Meeting the needs of children, families, and communities post-disaster: Lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Kilmer, R.P., Gil-Rivas, V., Tedeschi, R.G., & Calhoun, L.G. (Eds.) (2010). *Meeting the needs of children, families, and communities post-disaster: Lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Klingman, A., & Cohen, E. (2004). *School-based multisystemic interventions for mass trauma.* New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

La Greca, A.M., Sevin, S.W., & Sevin, E. (2005). After the Storm: A guide to help children cope with the psychological effects of a hurricane. Retrieved from: www.7-dippity.com.

La Greca, A.M., Silverman, W. K., Vernberg, E.M., & Roberts, M.C. (Eds.) (2002). *Helping children cope with disasters.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

La Greca, A.M., Vernberg, E.M., Silverman, W. K., Vogel, A.L., & Prinstein, M.J. (Eds.) (2001). *Helping children cope with disasters: A manual for professionals working with elementary school children.* Retrieved from: www.psy.miami.edu/child/helping_children_cope.html.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/katrina/pubs.asp

U.S. Department of Education: http://www.ed.gov/

University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), Center for Mental Health in Schools/School Mental Health Project (SMHP): http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/

University of Illinois Extension Disaster Resources. Children, Stress, and Natural Disasters: A Guide for Teachers: www.ag.uiuc.edu/~disaster/teacher/teacher.html

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PART VII: Other Helpful Community-Based Approaches

Self-Help

Fortunately, there are many resources now available for starting self-help groups. For example, there are several “how to” sheets from the Self-Help Network of Kansas. You may want to view their web site for other resources:

The American Self-help Group Clearinghouse has an online database of over 900 national or international groups with chapters throughout the U.S. - http://www.mentalhelp.net/selfhelp/

Starting and Maintaining Support Groups Library
The SHARE (Self-Help Answer and Resource Exchange) "How-To" library provides over 60 handouts to leaders of existing self-help groups and to persons wishing to start new groups. The handouts contain very concrete lists, guidelines, and tips on a wide variety of topics such as developing group goals and guidelines, publicizing your group, and professional involvement in self-help groups. Handouts are available for viewing in a PDF format.
http://www.selfhelpnetwork.wichita.edu/

The topics, each with its own PDF, include:

Introduction to Self-Help Groups
- Self-Help Groups: Are They Effective?
- Self-Help Groups: Toward a Definition
- Why Self-Help Groups Work

Starting and Organizing a Self-Help Group
- The Effective Self-Help Group
- Helpful Hints For a Successful 1st Meeting
- The Importance of Community Support Groups
- Keeping a Support Group Going: 5 Things You Should Remember
- National Self-Help Organizations: To Affiliate or Not to Affiliate
- Principles For Organizing Community Support Groups
- Resource Bibliography
- Group Goals and Guidelines
- Self-Help Group Resource Bibliography
- Starting a Support Group: 5 Things You Need to Know
- Starting a Support Group: Some Important Decisions to Consider
- Suggested Techniques For Recruiting Group Members
- Suggestions on Locating a Meeting Place
- Ten Ways to Guarantee That Your Support Group Will Fail
- Program Ideas For Your Self-Help Group

Publicizing Your Self-Help Group
- Learn to Blow Your Own Horn: Ways to Publicize your Self-Help Group
- Sample News Release to Radio, Newspaper & TV Stations
- Public Relations Strategies

Professional Involvement in Self-Help Groups
- Professionals & Self-Help Groups: A Reading Sampler
- Professional Involvement in Community Support Groups
- Starting a Self-Help Group: Suggestions For Professionals
- Ways Professionals Can Support You in Your Efforts
- Working With Professionals: Suggested Guidelines For Self-Helpers

Internal Group Issues
- Advice: If it Feels So Good to Give, How Could it Be Bad?
- Evaluating Communication in Your Self-Help Group
- For Your Ears Only: Keeping Confidentiality in Self-Help Groups
- Group Maintenance Strategies: Ways to Strengthen Your Group When Problems Arise
- Maintaining Confidentiality in Rural Self-Help Groups
- On Dealing with Personal Anger in Self-Help Groups
- Problem Solving vs. Advice Giving
- Responsibility of Group Members to Each Other
- Strategies For How to Cope with Distress & Manage a Crisis in Group

- Dealing with Challenges
- When Talking Gets in the Way of Helping

Special Issues
- Advocacy Tools & Strategies
- The Clearinghouse Advisor on Fund Raising
- Considerations For Nonprofit Status
- Developing a Phone Network For Your Group
- Self-Help Groups: Managing Your Resources
- Suggestions on Evaluating a Self-Help Group
- Tips For Starting Rural Self-Help Groups
- Self-Help Groups: Shelters From the Storms of Rural Life
- Formation of a Nonprofit Corporation

Self-Help Leadership and Facilitation
- The Art of Active Listening
- Asking "Good" Questions
- Basic Helping Skills: Techniques For Active Listening
- Discussion Questions
- Disengagement Strategies
- Facilitating a Support Group: 5 Basic Goals
- How Can I Be an Effective Contact Person For My Group
- How to Build Shared Leadership
- Key Characteristics of an Effective Support Group Leader
- Preventing Burnout Among Self-Help Group Leaders
- Resource Bibliography For Self-Help Group Leaders
- Some Help For the Helper: A Guide For the Self-Help Group Contact Person
- 10 Ways to Increase Your Choices of Motivating Others
- Welcoming a New Member to Your Group
- Listening to Understand

Social Marketing

Additional information about social marketing and many other elements related to how to develop a program, working with organizations and communities can be found online at The Community Tool Box web site http://ctb.ku.edu/tools//sub_section_related_1321.htm

Train-the-Trainer

Baron N. (2006). The "TOT": A global approach for the Training of Trainers for psychosocial and. mental health interventions in countries affected by war, violence and natural disasters. *Intervention: International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counselling in Areas of Armed Conflict, 4*, 109-126.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC; 2007). *IASC Guidelines on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings*. Geneva.

PART VIII. HOW TO TRACK YOUR RESULTS

Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The Good Enough Guide: What difference are we making? How do we know? The Good Enough Guide helps busy field workers to address these questions. It offers a set of basic guidelines on how to be accountable to local people and measure program impact in emergency situations and contains a variety of tools on needs assessment and profiling. Its 'good enough' approach emphasizes simple and practical solutions and encourages the user to choose tools that are safe, quick, and easy to implement. *The Good Enough Guide* was developed by the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB). The ECB is a collaborative effort by CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, the International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Oxfam GB, Save the Children, and World Vision International. http://publications.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam/display.asp?isbn=0855985941

PART IX. WHAT NEXT? PREPARING FOR THE NEXT (OR THE FIRST) DISASTER & PART X. ENHANCING DISASTER READINESS THROUGH PUBLIC EDUCATION

Coalition Formation – How to Create a Coalition on Disaster Recovery before a Disaster. Despite the word "before" in the title, the material here seems potentially very useful after a disaster as well. http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/disaster/factsheets/html/6.html

Laguna Beach: From the city of Laguna Beach, California. Excellent long manual on various aspects of disaster preparedness. While the main focus is on preparedness, the section on neighborhood organizing is useful both after as well as before a disaster event. http://www.lagunabeachcity.net/community/disaster

Fremont: From the city of Fremont, California. Focuses mostly on family and neighborhood preparedness, but also has a useful neighborhood skills and equipment inventory that can be used following a disaster. The general city of Fremont site links to a great deal of useful general community involvement information, at http://www.fremont.gov/Community/CommunityInvolvement/default.htm,

including a disaster preparedness tip sheet.
http://www.ci.fremont.ca.us/NR/rdonlyres/e4ndm2ettckgdlktjjx7vl7nysw4adovjeb254of7euznmcpiasku55yau4cdgxjzrq3t4uhphldgd5guqkspeuvx6g/PD-126+Tip+Sheet+Disaster+Preparedness+.pdf

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